



The Other Israel

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TALKS AND PROVOCATIONS

Tel-Aviv, January 15, 1992.

Whatever its other merits, the Madrid Conference was certainly a major media event. During the three days of the conference, the streets of Tel-Aviv were almost completely deserted, with nearly the whole population sitting glued to their television sets, watching the non-stop, day and night broadcasts. This was the first time that Israeli Television exposed its viewers to a 45-minute long, eloquent presentation of the Palestinian case, delivered by Dr. Haider Abd-el-Shafi of Gaza – who was, to Shamir's chagrin, given time equal to all other heads of delegation.

No less significant than the official deliberations were the unofficial meetings and chance encounters of Israelis and Arabs – of which, too, the viewers at home caught a glimpse. Thus, Israeli TV broadcast the surprising scene of Yoash Tzidon, extreme-right Knesset Member and Israeli delegate to Madrid, shaking hands and joking with Albert Algazarian, spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation and lecturer at Bir-Zeit University, "Cradle of the Intifada". These two people never met in the region itself where their respective social circles rarely touch in any but violent ways.

Even Prime Minister Shamir was not entirely immune to the dynamics of the Madrid Process. In between cataloguing all Palestinian sins of the past century, Shamir inserted the sentence: *I have listened carefully to the Palestinian representative's valiant efforts to explain the suffering of his people.* Faces in the conference lighted up, for a moment. Israeli Television commentator Ehud Ya'ari remarked: *This was the first time ever that an Israeli Prime Minister acknowledged the suffering of the Palestinian people.*

The most profound effect of Madrid was in the Occupied Territories. In general, even those Palestinians who supported the conference expected little to come of it. However, the sight of their people's representatives being received by the great powers of the world created a wave of enthusiasm, and even of euphoria, throughout the Occupied Territories.

The returning delegates were given a hero's welcome; Palestinian youths went out into the streets, holding olive branches in their hands, giving

them to the laughing soldiers they had been fighting but days before, and even decorating Israeli military vehicles with them – to the great consternation of the Israeli Army High Command.

The time was particularly fitting for what diplomats term *confidence-building measures*. This would have involved Israeli willingness to announce a freeze of settlement activity, a release of prisoners and the legalization of political activity in the Occupied Territories. Such steps on the Israeli side would have enabled the Palestinian leadership to proclaim a suspension of the armed struggle, and the Arab states – to lift their trade boycott against Israel. This should have been a lucrative deal for any reasonable Israeli government, but it implies a definite abandonment of the "Greater Israel" dream – a price the Shamir government is totally unwilling to pay.

By the middle of November, the government had definitely shaken off the Spirit of Madrid and resolutely embarked upon a series of what Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi termed *confidence-destroying measures*: the Palestinian "olive-branch demonstrations" were proclaimed to be "propaganda gimmicks of the terrorists" and soldiers were ordered to disperse them; unofficial promises to reopen Bir-Zeit University (closed since the beginning of the Intifada) were withdrawn; settlement activities were increased throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, and a considerable slice of the 1992 government budget earmarked for the same purpose; and to top it all, the Israeli police evicted Palestinian families from their homes at East Jerusalem's Silwan Village, to make place for Jewish settlers.

Palestinian opponents of the Madrid Process contributed their share to the escalation. In particular, George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine embarked upon a series of well-planned ambushes at the sides of main roads in the Occupied Territories – ambushes scheduled to coincide with each stage of the Madrid/Washington talks and leaving numerous Israeli settlers dead and wounded.

The settlers reacted by launching massive retaliation raids upon Arab towns and villages, as well as by extending their settlements beyond the boundaries approved by the government. The army, for its part,

responded to the armed attacks by increasingly repressive measures: mass detentions, and the imposition of prolonged curfews.

The first round of the bilateral negotiations, held in December at Washington, was overshadowed by this escalation. While the talks were going on, the town of Ramallah – where several Palestinian negotiators have their homes – was under tight military curfew, with armed settlers allowed to rampage in the streets. The talks were soon bogged down in procedures and technicalities; their main achievement was the creation of a cordial personal contact between the respective heads of the Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian delegations. Chief Israeli negotiator Elyakim Rubinstein, a relative moderate and the only Israeli veteran of Camp-David involved in the present talks, was reportedly chafing at the extremely limited mandate he got from Shamir.

In January, the next round of bilateral talks was preceded by a new Shamir provocation: deportation orders against twelve Palestinians. This provided the Palestinians with a United Nations victory largely nullifying the effect of the earlier Israeli success – the U.N. *Zionism is not racism* certificate.

Things came to a head in as the delegates convened in Washington. The procedural deadlock was finally broken and the Israeli and Palestinian delegates were at last able to sit face to face. This breakthrough was followed immediately by a new armed attack upon settlers in the West Bank and new retaliations by the settlers.

At Washington, these events had the effect of making negotiators on both sides abandon diplomatic language and engage in half an hour's emotional outburst, where all traumas of the Israeli and the Palestinian past were laid bare. At the end of this, however, one very concrete step was taken: the Israeli delegates handed to their Palestinian interlocutors a document in which the Israeli government officially undertakes to negotiate on *Interim Self-Government Arrangements*.

Though the document contained no details, the ministers of the Techiya and Moledet parties – who regard any kind of self-government as inevitably leading to the creation of an independent Palestinian state – were quick to offer their resignation, thus depriving the Shamir government of its parliamentary majority.

For all the provocations which Yitzchak Shamir is willing to countenance or actively support, there is one thing which he cannot afford: to be saddled with

the responsibility for the failure of the negotiations.

Shamir now faces two basic options: to continue the peace talks, seeking the support of the opposition Labor Party – or to call early elections. Shamir could expect that without an Israeli government competent to make any significant decision, the negotiating process would be blocked for nearly half a year. By then, the American elections campaign would be well on, thus prolonging the blockage for another half a year, at least – and for far longer if Bush fails to be re-elected, and a new administration needs to sort out its Middle East policies from scratch.

Such a gambit has its own risks for Shamir. He is well-aware that the general Israeli public is weary of the endless struggle against the Intifada, and that his own Likud Party voters are mainly concerned with the deteriorating economy and the alarming rise in unemployment and poverty. Should Shamir's maneuvers result in the rejection of Israel's request for 10 billion Dollars in Housing Loan Guarantees, a Likud electoral disaster may ensue.

Over the past year, Yitzchak Shamir has undertaken two incompatible sets of promises and obligations: one towards the hardline Israeli nationalists, inside and outside his own party; the other – towards the President of the United States. Soon, he will have to decide on which promises to renege; probably not even Shamir himself knows what his choice will be. But one thing seems certain: the choice will be connected with the amount of pressure to which Shamir will be exposed from different quarters. For peace-seekers in Israel and abroad, now is the time to mobilize all available forces.

The Editor

■ On November 25, the Jerusalem Municipal Council bestowed the prestigious title *Distinguished citizen of Jerusalem* upon Dr. Ya'akov Arnon.

During his long public career, Arnon headed the Zionist Federation in Holland, was the Director-General of the Israeli Ministry of Finance, and later of the Israeli Electricity Company. In 1976, he participated in forming the ICIPP. Together with Uri Avnery and Matti Peled, Arnon took part in the ICIPP delegation which traveled to Tunis in 1983 and met with Yasser Arafat.

The fact that Arnon's nomination was approved unanimously - he also got the Likud councilors' votes - is proof of his personal respectability and of the changing climate in the country. Or of both.

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Zvi Shuldiner - a political scientist lecturing at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and member of the ICIPP executive - was among the journalists present at the Madrid Conference, of which he gave us the following report.

"Being myself a long-time advocate of an international peace conference on the Middle East including the PLO, the Madrid Conference was not the fulfillment of my boldest dreams; even so, I regard it as an important event. For the first time Israeli officials talked with a Palestinian representation which disposes of a degree of international legitimacy and, at the same time, is firmly linked to the PLO. For the first time in many years, Palestinians were speaking as equals with Israelis.

I personally hold that Dr. El-Shafi's presentation was one of the most serious; it was especially interesting for peace activists. It was possible to see in his words some reflections of long years of contact with the peace movement in Israel.

It was of course a media event. One could say that it was illusive, that the real negotiations were going to take place behind closed doors. That it was all a show to

disinform people. On the other hand, as such it also had repercussions. It was a big theater presentation staged by James Baker in order to arouse expectations, and create an atmosphere of pressure - especially on Israel. And it became soon clear that to a certain extent it worked.

Madrid observations

Something happened in Madrid to Deputy Foreign Minister Bin-yamin Netanyahu, and to Elyakim Rubinstein - head of the delegation meeting with the Palestinians and Jordanians. They suddenly wanted to succeed and started to react to the dynamics of the dialogue game. The press conference of Netanyahu with Arab journalists was a historical event, especially since it was directly broadcast to the Israeli viewers for more than an hour. I was present when the Israeli reporters Ehud Ya'ari and Haim Yavin were fighting with the Jerusalem studio, fighting like lions to keep it on the air. Meanwhile European journalists were struggling with the Spanish police to be let in, but they did not succeed. This press conference was an exclusive club, for Semites only.

There was an atmosphere of euphoria, an euphoria we knew was exaggerated, but still we wanted the euphoria. We were part of it, although we knew at the same time that there are many pitfalls ahead. We felt quite schizophrenic.

There were important small things happening: thanks to the mature attitude of the Palestinians it could happen that the Israelis who went to Madrid in order to make a deal with Syria and ignore the Palestinians, after a few days seemed to have forgotten about these initial intentions. When the Syrians had not (yet) arrived for the first bilateral talks, Israeli spokesmen were enthusiastically reporting about the achievement of having made a good start with the Palestinian side.

We also clearly felt that, even with the great differences, there is some common basis between the extremist Israeli government and the Syrians who are not moderate either. Of course, there was a hangover after Madrid. It had been just the beginning. There is still a long way to go, with our government using every possibility of delay, and with two elections ahead, here and in the United States. BZ

Arms control in the Middle East

by Matti Peled

The issue of arms control has become one of the most urgent matters to be tackled in the Middle East. Paradoxically, the arms race in the region has assumed unprecedented proportions since the end of the Cold War. Due to the reduction of armed forces, the surplus of weapons - in the former Soviet Union as well as in the United States - has turned into a lucrative merchandise, busily utilized on both sides for supporting their respective economies. The influx of arms to the Middle East has increased dramatically since the Gulf War, just when President Bush issued the call to limit the supply of arms to the region. Needless to say, the supply of American weapons forms the lion's share of the market, but (the fragments of) the Soviet Union as well as other industrial nations are not lagging behind.

The reason for the sale of arms, in the Middle East as elsewhere, is very simply that there is a demand for it. Today, when the ideology of market economy has gained supremacy over all other ideologies, it should not be surprising to realize that as long as there will be demand for the commodity there will also be supply. Other considerations, such as the good of humanity or the wellbeing of nations, are easily put

aside when it comes to fulfilling the desire for profits. A case in point can be found in the recent history of Iraq.

These days, people are amazed at the extent of arms buildup achieved by Baghdad which included a whole infrastructure for the production of arms of mass destruction. But some basic facts are deliberately forgotten by those responsible, when this is presented to the general public. First of all, it is forgotten that for a period of eight years, between 1980 and 1988, when Iraq was fighting Iran, the whole of the Western World looked upon Iraq with great favour. Not only was its unwarranted attack upon Iran considered an act of grace, but Iraq was offered every possible help in order to succeed in that war, or at least to carry it on as long as possible in order to weaken the revolutionary fervour of Khomeini.

Such encouragement took the form, among other things, of supplying Iraq with every conceivable means of warfare, regardless of how and against whom it would be employed. These days, when many people are amazed at the extent of Iraq's military infrastructure, it is important to remember that during the past fifteen years over 450 Western companies helped build Baghdad's installations for producing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Thousands of experts and technicians were sent to Iraq for that purpose. No Western government is now

prepared to admit its responsibility for the amazing buildup in Iraq. We are requested to believe that, for all the magnificent intelligence services operated by them, the rich industrial countries were not aware of the tremendous traffic of experts and materials that kept pouring into Iraq over so many years. Nor were they aware – or so they would us believe – of the huge sums of money that entered their economies, due to these huge transactions.

The lesson to be learned and memorized by humanity is that the avarice of big companies is unrestricted and the willingness of governments to aid and abet them goes very far. Therefore, any hope that the Middle East will ever get out of the spiraling arms race could not be based on restrictions of arms sales. The only way out is to limit or eliminate altogether the demand for such merchandise. The key is not in the hands of the supplying nations, but in the hands of the buyers.

The real question is whether the countries of the Middle East could be persuaded to stop buying arms, or at least to limit the arms deals to much smaller proportions and exclude from their arsenals weapons of mass destruction.

November 30 Dimona demonstration: Manifesto
WE CALL FOR:

- Making the Middle East a region totally free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.
- Putting an end to the production of nuclear arms in Israel.
- Israeli adherence to the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.
- Opening the Dimona Pile to inspection by The International Atomic Energy Agency.
- Releasing to the Israeli public information about the safety measures at the Dimona Pile, where a fire was recently reported.
- Disclosing information regarding the place and the means nuclear waste is buried or otherwise disposed of in Israel.
- The release of Mordechai Vanunu from prison, or – at the very least – the end of the cruel isolation in which he is held since his illegal kidnapping by the government of Israel, five years ago.

Contact:

The Vanunu Solidarity Committee, POB 7323, Jerusalem.

The plans of the United States for the "Regional Peace Conference" – started in Madrid and continued in Washington – is to bring the parties, Israel and the Arabs, to a kind of multilateral negotiations on regional issues. These include the problems of water, ecology, economic development and limitations on arms supply. The Americans seem aware that such limitation cannot be achieved by merely forbidding their own arms industry to export arms to the Middle East.

The idea that the local governments should discuss the question in a multilateral forum is an excellent idea. But there would be no point in holding multilateral talks as long as the bilateral talks do not

show progress. The difference is that in the bilateral talks the immediate grievances of the parties are expected to be discussed and resolved. Only then would it be reasonable to start worrying about a problem concerning the region as a whole. It is no wonder that Syria refuses to attend the multilateral talks as long as Israel persists in its refusal to withdraw from the Occupied Territories. It is not likely, either, that Jordan and Israel will start cooperating over the Dead Sea and its minerals before the Palestinian Question is resolved. We can also see how this core problem of the entire Israeli-Arab conflict impedes the development of normal relations between Israel and Egypt, even twelve years after a formal peace treaty was signed between both countries.

The order of the peace process seems obvious: first there should be an agreement between Israel and the different Arab parties, including the Palestinians. When such agreement is reached the ground would be prepared for the next phase of discussion – and regional issues could be taken up. At that phase the question of the arms race would no longer be an insurmountable problem, since nations at peace are much less interested in arming themselves beyond reasonable limits.

Until then, we can only hope that the ongoing supply of arms to the region will not result in a sudden new crisis, which may upset the balance not only in the Middle East but far beyond.

The above is the text of a lecture delivered by Matti Peled on November 8, 1991, at Grasse (South of France), in the framework of the "Trans-Mediterranean Festival". For the fourth time the free radio stations of the Provence Region invited scientists and artists to foster a sense of partnership among the people living around the Mediterranean. Matti Peled was also invited to Marseille and Toulon, where he lectured on the Israeli-Arab conflict in general, and the chances for peace following the Madrid Conference in particular.

The nuclear debate started

Since 1959, when the Israeli government gave orders for a building project at Dimona, rumours were circulating that this was going to be the place where Israel would develop *The Bomb*. However, then Prime Minister David Ben Gurion personally told President John Kennedy that it was not so, that nothing but an ordinary textile factory was being constructed at Dimona. Only after U.S. spy plane photographs showed unmistakably the profile of a nuclear pile, was it admitted that a *Center for Nuclear Research* did exist in Dimona. Ben-Gurion had some sharp exchanges with Kennedy over this matter, but subsequent American presidents acquiesced in Israel's developing a nuclear monopoly in the Middle East. The existence of the Israeli nuclear arsenal did, however, create apprehensions among Israel's neighbors, several of whom developed their own nuclear aspirations.

Following the Gulf War, the Iraqi nuclear program

received world-wide notoriety. Other Middle East countries, such as Iran, Syria, Libya and Algeria, are also known to harbor nuclear ambitions – and to seek the help of Pakistan, whose nuclear program is well-advanced. Moreover, new and alarming possibilities are created by the presence of nuclear arms in the former Soviet republics – among them Muslim republics, as Israeli papers never forget to mention.

Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens expressed a not unfounded concern over these developments. However, by drawing international attention to the nuclear arms race in the Middle East he also helped draw renewed attention to Israel's own considerable nuclear capacity.

In different parts of the world, would-be nuclear powers are being induced to give up their ambitions. North Korea, Brazil and Argentina, as well as South-Africa – for a long time Israel's "partner in nuclear" – seem willing to do so. In the Middle East, the Iraqi example created a precedent of international interference to stop a country's nuclear program – and some American members of the U.N. inspection team already stated openly their belief that this precedent would, sooner or later, be applied to Israel.

The multilateral Middle-East peace talks, due to open in Moscow at the end of January, are to feature disarmament – conventional and non-conventional – on their agenda.

For many years, it was impossible to have a real public debate on the nuclear issue in Israel: there existed a silent consensus about the necessity for nuclear weapons. Even in the peace movement many *Nuclear Doves* could be found, who believe that withdrawal from the Occupied Territories is only possible provided that Israel possesses a powerful nuclear deterrent. Thus *The Vanunu Solidarity Committee* remained for years little more than a name.

The new international situation is also changing things inside Israel. On the pages of Israel's most prestigious daily *Ha'aretz* (and, to a smaller extent, in other papers) the nuclear debate is shaping up. For the first time many columnists, strategists and political scientists – such as Professor Shai Feldman, for years the most outspoken ideologue of the Israeli nuclear deterrent – are seriously considering the possibility that Israel may have to give up its nuclear arsenal, and the conditions under which this could be acceptable.

On Saturday, November 30, an anti-nuclear demonstration took place outside the Dimona Nuclear Pile – the first such demonstration ever since the pile was constructed in 1959. It was far from massive; only sixteen activists answered the call of *The Vanunu Solidarity Committee* (see box on page 3), and traveled all the way from Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv to Dimona. That number was, however, enough to throw the forces of law and order out of balance.

Hundreds of policemen, drawn from all over the

southern region, were waiting for hours in advance; and the Nuclear Center Security Guards were prowling all around, to see to it that none of the numerous press photographers and television crews present would catch a glimpse of the Dimona Pile's dome – though Vanunu has already provided the whole world with good pictures of that dome's classified innards.

The Israeli press, too, gave prominent coverage to the demonstration of the sixteen. All papers carried photographs of the demonstrators holding signs reading: **Let my people know!** and **Mordechai Vanunu – Prisoner of Conscience!** Gabi Nitzan wrote in *Hadashot* (1.12.1991): *It is a shame that only sixteen people demonstrated on such a vital issue; sixteen thousand at least should have been there!*

War over Silwan

At half past five in the morning, I heard knocking on the door and shouts: Open, open, this is the police! I looked out of the window and saw many policemen and religious settlers. We opened the door. They burst in and just threw us out, into the rain. Me, my husband, our children, the whole family. We lived 25 years in this house. Now, we have nowhere to go.

Through this testimony by Fatma Kara'in of Silwan, published in *Hadashot* on the morning of December 13 – and through similar accounts published by other papers – the Israeli public became aware of the manner in which settlers overnight took over six more houses at East Jerusalem's Silwan Village (see also *TOI-49*, p. 8).

Shocked reactions at this act – declared by Attorney-General Harish to be perfectly legal under the prevailing Israeli law – were not confined to the ranks of the peace movement. One of the first to participate in the protest vigils and demonstrations at Silwan was the poet Haim Guri, who was in the 1960s among the founders of the "Greater Israel" movement, and enthusiastically supported the settlers.

Another unusual case was 80-year old Teddy Kollek, Mayor of Jerusalem, who personally organised a protest march from the Prime Minister's Office to Silwan Village, on December 25. Hundreds of well-known Jerusalemites attended, who – like Kollek – never before participated in something similar. Kollek spoke for many middle-of-the-road Israelis, when he said: *Exactly because I want a continuation of Israeli rule in East Jerusalem, I also want Arabs to be treated as human beings. What the government and the settlers are doing is madness. They are poisoning the air in my Jerusalem. How can the Arabs not hate us now!*

So far, all protests were of no avail; nor did the government heed the complaints by Ya'akov Terner, head of the Israeli police, who regards the Silwan settlement as a serious drain upon his insufficient and overstrained manpower.

The Kara'in family was restored to its house for a few days, by a court order; then another court issued

a countermanding order, and the family was again evicted. They are now living in a tent near their former home. Several Peace Now volunteers stay with them to protect the tent, which settlers already once attempted to pull down.

The settlers remain in possession of the Silwan houses; they do not even feel the need to be secretive about their plans regarding further expansion. By their actions, the settlers have contributed to their own becoming more and more isolated in the Israeli public. But that, of course, is cold comfort to the people of Silwan.

Peace Now in the Territories

by Beate Zilversmidt

Through advertisements in the papers, Peace Now called upon its supporters to rally in Silwan at two o'clock in the afternoon on Friday, December 20. The ongoing settler infiltration and takeover of the village had been protested by daily Peace Now vigils – with the repeatedly televised participation of Feisal Hussein. Through campaigning, Peace Now hoped to bring about a mass protest.

“Why not on Sabbath?” was the comment of many. “Who is able to get there early Friday afternoon?” On the next Sabbath, December 21, however, a *new immigrants settlement tour* was to take place – also organised by Peace Now – for which thousands of Russians already registered. And the settlers’ Silwan agenda did not allow us to wait another week.

In spite of the unfavourable hour, an overwhelming number of Peace Now supporters showed up at Silwan, carrying slogans and filling the long main street. For many of the thousands present it may have been the first time to take to the streets – to the streets of a Palestinian village. Among the Knesset Members who came – not to make a speech this time, but just to be there like everybody else – was Uzi Bar’am, former Secretary-General of the Labor Party.

Initially, not many of the Arabs living in Silwan were to be seen. The few who were there disclosed that the population had been cut off by the police and did not get access to the main street; only those whose houses happened to be at the very center of the village succeeded in being present. These few were somber: would the many friendly Israelis help them get rid of the settlers – who had the full support of the government? So far, their streets seemed to be just the scene of another Israeli event from which they were excluded.

Suddenly a whole group of Palestinian women and children broke through, chanting, in Arabic, of *Intifada, Freedom and Victory*. Perhaps they came via an unguarded path, or found a passage through fences of backyards. Their presence became at once the central event. Before the mounted police got to them, Israelis had joined the group and now the Palestinians could be heard, from time to time, chanting in Hebrew: **Yes to Peace – No to Occupation!**, and **Two States for Two Peoples!** There were some elder Palestinian men who tried to convince that

‘*Now, it is enough! Go to the sidewalk!*’, – but to no avail: the group marched from the beginning to the end of the crowded street. At the end waited a handful of young counterdemonstrators, shouting **Death to the Arabs and the leftists**. Fistfights were beginning. Only when the Peace Now leaders, accompanied by Feisal Hussein announced that the demonstration was over, the police with its horses separated the sides. They did not show the kind of ferocity exhibited in previous similar situations. The settlers of Silwan had succeeded somewhat alienating the Jerusalem police.

On the way home, the Peace Now supporters – though they had felt strong in number – also felt worried and powerless about what would happen in the coming hours and weeks to the Palestinians who happen to live in Silwan.

Another Friday, three weeks later, a crowded bus plus several private cars with Peace Now supporters set out for the West Bank settlement of Beth-El. Numerous Peace Now vigils, protesting at the spot where another new settlement was being set up, had lately left the activists with a feeling that other tactics were needed. Today’s plan was to distribute leaflets among the settlers of Beth-El, sharply condemning the settlement policy – and warning that armed settler gangs rampaging around in Arab towns and villages would not be tolerated anymore. The reason to use again the Friday afternoon was not to especially upset the religious among the settlers by arriving on Sabbath.

The settlers are working hard to improve their image in the Israeli public. On television, or radio, they put forward well-educated, well-behaved figures; Israeli peace-activists, when demonstrating at their sites, often are invited in for coffee: *After all, we are all Jews, aren't we?*

However, the members of Beth-El settlement were totally taken by surprise. Therefore, when the Peace Now supporters walked in with banners, Beth-El’s less sophisticated elements were running free and starting a fistfight with the peace activists. Banners were torn; piles of leaflets were pulled from the hands and destroyed; there was screaming: *Out of our place!*, and the answer: *It isn't your place!* An angry journalist was heard shouting: *You settlers complain that the press is against you, but what should we write when you destroy our cameras?*

Gradually, the fury of the beginning calmed down, and here and there conversations started. The TOI-staff found a settler couple, of which especially the man, who was wearing a scullcap, tried to behave utterly pleasant. He even was willing to agree that “where one and a half million live under a rule which they didn’t choose themselves, democracy does not really exist”.

Only in the end of the conversation were names exchanged. The man turned out to be Pinchas Wallerstein (see TOI-33, p. 11). Pinchas Wallerstein is the settler who, in the first month of the Intifada, got off his car with his gun to hunt stone-throwers – and shot a child of twelve to death ...

■ On November 17, forty members of the Women's Peace Network – among them Knesset Members Shulamit Aloni and Tamar Gozanski, and Labor Party activist Yael Dayan – visited the Ramallah home of Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi, whom the Israeli government intended to prosecute for meeting with PLO representatives. That evening, Israeli television showed KM Aloni embracing Ashrawi and stating: *One day, this house will be the home of a minister in the Palestinian government.*

The intention to prosecute Ashrawi provoked many more protests; even several government ministers expressed their doubts. Thus, Health Minister Ehud Olmert stated: *We know that Ashrawi herself is a PLO representative. Are we going to forbid her to talk to herself or look in the mirror?*

The issue was effectively decided after U.S. President Bush made it known that he was *day and night worrying about Ashrawi's fate.* The Israeli government had to announce that she would not be prosecuted, "for lack of evidence". The whole affair served to discredit the law against meetings with the PLO, and to increase the calls for the release of Abie Nathan (*see separate article*).

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Youth against hatred

by Manny Darabaner

In the meetings and discussions of Peace Now Youth we discovered that our own members sometimes talk in stereotypes about Palestinians, and that most of us had never had personal contact with a Palestinian. We decided to do something about it, in order to get to know these people whom we propose to make peace with, and especially – to meet with Palestinians our age.

As a preliminary step three of us set out for Gaza, where we visited the Human Rights Information Center and met with Adv. Muhammad Hashem Abu-Sha'aban. We discussed the technical details involved and decided to let the meeting take place on Saturday, November 16, with the participation of some 120 boys and girls. For nearly all of us, Israelis and Palestinians alike, this was going to be the first chance to participate in such a dialogue.

A good meeting place suggested itself: Geizy Shavit's well-known Peace Monument (*See TOI-42 p.8-9*) in the fields of Kibbutz Nahal-Oz. The statue is located but a hundred meters from the Gaza Strip border. However, to cross that border, Palestinians of the Gaza Strip need a permit from the Israeli authorities. This problem threatened to wreck the whole initiative. When the military government gave permits only to 32 of the Palestinians, Labor Knesset Member Amir Peretz repeatedly called the Gaza military governor. The last call, at two after midnight a few hours before the event itself, finally produced permits for all 53 Palestinian participants.

The Palestinians, when they arrived, greeted us with olive branches; we replied by giving them roses. (*Photos of this scene appeared on the front pages of Israeli papers. Ed.*) We heard speeches by Israeli and Palestinian politicians, and by youths of both sides. The speaker for Peace Now Youth was Hayam Gazawi, daughter of an Arab father and a Jewish mother, who speaks both languages fluently.

Then came the really important part: we broke up into small groups, each with a moderator who knows both Arabic and Hebrew, and we started what the government is so reluctant to do: talk. It soon turned out that language was not a big problem; most of the Palestinian youths spoke either Hebrew or English. We Israelis told of our dilemmas regarding military service in the Territories. From the Palestinians we heard what it is like to be occupied – horrible stories of detention and of being beaten up by soldiers. Many of the Palestinians were bitter and sceptical, tending to hold all Israelis responsible for the acts of the Israeli government. We, for our part, made a big effort to convince them that it is possible to change things within the framework of Israeli democracy.

In the evening, after singing songs of peace, we marched together, Israelis and Palestinians waving olive branches, as far as the barbed wire fence separating Israel from the Gaza Strip.

Although the meeting went according to schedule, all of us felt that something was still missing. A second meeting took place in Tel-Aviv, on December 28. We had a big hall, decorated with the slogan: **The youth, united, will stop the hatred!** Again we broke up into small groups. This time we did not start debating; each group was supposed to make a big painting, reflecting the longing for peace and the hardships both sides suffer because of the Intifada.

After the painting in groups we went for a joint walk in the streets of Tel-Aviv, and from the way the youngsters mingled and talked it was clear that the ice had really been broken.

There is soon going to be a third meeting. Meanwhile, several of the participants already exchanged telephone numbers and are going to visit each other in a less formal way.

Contact: Peace Now Youth, POB 6733, Tel-Aviv 61066.

■ On December 25, four busloads of Israelis arrived at Beit Sahour (West Bank) where they had been invited by **Rapprochement** to participate in a joint lighting of candles for peace on this Christmas day. **Rapprochement** is a group of Palestinians and Israelis who since the outbreak of the Intifada have organized dialogue meetings for hundreds of participants.

At the parking lot a few exchanges were tried (*'Do you think this is a merry Christmas for us?' – 'We hope that next year we will have to take our passports when we come!'*). Then there was a torchlight procession culminating in a rally at a school courtyard, where Israeli and Palestinian speakers addressed the audience – in speeches which should have been heard also by many people who were not present.

Meanwhile young Palestinians, some with covered

faces, were enfolding a Palestinian flag behind the speakers – in what was apparently an unplanned part of the program. The loudest applause was for the Iraq-born Israeli Latif Dori who told in Arabic why he did not agree with Shamir. After the meeting was over Dori had another occasion to use his languages (and his charisma). Thanks to his intervention, border guards let a young Palestinian (the one of the flag?) go free after all. BZ

■ December 30 was a particularly heavy day for Palestinian activist Feisal Hussein. In Tul-Karm, on the West Bank, his speech at a rally in support of the peace talks was disrupted by members of the Islamic Hamas movement, shouting: *Husseini is a traitor to the Palestinian cause!* The event turned into a generalised fistfight between Hussein's supporters and his opponents.

Directly from there, Hussein traveled to another meeting – at Tel-Aviv University. Here, too, violent opponents of the peace talks made their appearance, with the shouts *Terrorist!* and *Death to the Arabs!*

However, the Tel-Aviv organisers were prepared: a human chain of peace activists blocked the rightists' way. Inside the packed hall Hussein – together with his fellow Palestinian leader Ziad Abu-Ziad, Tel-Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat and Labor Hawk Mordechai Gur – were able to carry on an animated discussion.

■ The expulsion orders issued against twelve Palestinians, on January 2, provoked many protests in Israel – not only from peace activists but even from such figures as Labor Party leader Yitzchak Rabin, who himself during his tenure as Defence Minister expelled a considerable number of Palestinians. Rabin and other Hawks did not oppose the expulsions in principle, but said that in this case the timing was wrong, and that expulsions have proved ineffective as a means of putting down the Intifada. (This was, in a way, confirmed by Defence Minister Arens himself, at the cabinet meeting of January 12 – where he reported an increase in "violations of public order" in the Occupied Territories as a result of the deportation orders.)

On January 3, one day after Arens announced the expulsions, a vigil of Mapam and Ratz activists took place at the Defence Ministry in Tel-Aviv, under the slogan: **Don't expell them – talk with them!**

In Jerusalem, an ad-hoc committee was formed under the name **The Geneva Convention Faithful**, whose members picketed the Prime Minister's residence on January 6 and 7. Further vigils were held by the **Tel-Aviv Democratic Women** on January 9, and by students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on January 13. The government-controlled Israeli television showed none of these, and the printed press only reported on the Ratz/Mapam vigil. However, these Israeli protests got into the daily news programs of Jordanian Television which has many Israeli viewers, especially in the Jerusalem area.

Meanwhile, the deportees appealed to the Military Appeal Committees. In the past these committees held their proceedings in camera. But on January 12,

a Supreme Court appeal, lodged by the **Israeli Civil Rights Association**, forced them to open their doors to the press and to the deportees' families.

The committees are extremely unlikely to overturn the deportation orders, but the cases do get a great deal of attention in the Israeli media. Thus *Hadashot* of January 10 gave a two-page profile of Sami Abu-Samhadna of Rafa, Gaza Strip. Abu-Samhadna spent altogether five years in *Ansar-3* – always as an Administrative Detainee, without ever having been charged with any act of violence, not even stone-throwing. His only sin is that in the detention camp he was extremely popular, not only with his fellow prisoners but also with the guards.

P.S. On the morning of January 17, a group of eight **Geneva Convention Faithful** picketed the session of the Hebron appeals committee, holding placards reading **Deportation-Crime Against Humanity!** Their being promptly arrested by soldiers did get them the attention of the Israeli media.

■ The Workers' Hotline is entering two appeals in the Supreme court. One appeal is on behalf of the Palestinian workers with valid work permits who were detained at their recognized assembly points. The court is asked to declare this practice illegal and return the exorbitant fines to the workers. (Since the end of the Gulf War, some 6000 Palestinian workers already suffered from this practice.)

A second appeal is aimed at compelling the National Insurance Fund to provide Palestinian workers with the same benefits currently received by Israeli workers.

Activists to visit Europe

Two activists of the **Workers' Hotline** will tour Europe – starting at Berlin, where they will attend a seminar at the end of February, 1992. In the first half of March they will tour *Germany, Holland, Denmark* and possibly other European countries as well.

To arrange an appointment with them, it is possible to contact Aliza Fuss in Berlin, phone 30.392.1668, or to the Tel-Aviv office: 972.3.5102266 (POB 2319).

'Not to replace us!'

On November 18, the Supreme Court in Jerusalem started hearing the appeal by the inhabitants of Ramiya – the tiny Arab village in the Galilee, threatened with total demolition, since the government earmarked its land for the construction of housing for Soviet immigrants (see *TOI-48, p.6, TOI-49, p.9*).

The courtroom was crowded: all 96 inhabitants of Ramiya, including a 101-year old woman and many babies, were present, as were dozens of Jewish and Arab supporters and three Knesset members.

This case faced the judges with an essentially political – rather than judicial – dilemma: a verdict in favor of the villagers would upset the government's land confiscation policy – while upholding the Ramiya confiscation may result in a general flare-up among the Galilee Arabs – as well as add to the embarrassment of Israeli embassies abroad, which are flooded with letters on the issue of Ramiya. The judges called upon the two sides – the Ramiya

inhabitants and the governmental Israel Lands Authority (I.L.A.) – to reach a compromise.

As negotiations opened, the I.L.A. presented the Ramiya people with two alternatives: to give up their ancestral lands and go to live in the Arab village of Ba'aneh – or to remain on part of the lands, but at the price of giving up completely their herds and their traditional way of life, and living thereafter in some of the apartment buildings to be erected on the site of their present houses.

The authorities probably expected them to prefer the first possibility, or to turn down both. The people of Ramiya, however, agreed to give up grazing and to live in apartment buildings, provided that they could retain ownership of this part of the land, thus enabling their descendants to continue living in the same area.

Thereupon, the I.L.A. promptly withdrew the entire "apartment building proposal", informing the Ramiyans that the only option on offer was for them to go away and receive a meager compensation of 5000 Shekels (about \$2000) per Dunam – a small fraction of the value the land will have, once it passes into the building contractors' hands. (Jewish farmers, dislocated because of the extension of Israeli cities, usually succeed in getting the real estate value of their land.)

"We seek to infringe on the rights of no one. We are ready to live together with the Jews in Carmiel. Neither do we have anything against new immigrants. But we cannot accept that they will replace us."

From the statement by the residents of Ramiya, read at their press conference, on December 23, 1991.

With the negotiations breaking down totally, the decision rests once again with the Supreme Court judges – who do not seem in a hurry to render a verdict. Meanwhile, solidarity actions are continuing.

On December 6, some 700 youths, Jews and Arabs, held a festival at Ramiya. Several Knesset members have demanded a parliamentary debate on the issue.

Protests to:

Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir, 3 Kaplan St., Hakiry, Jerusalem 91919. Fax: 972-2-664838 and/or to: The Israeli Embassy in your country.

Copies to:

The Ramiya Residents Committee, POB 388, Al Ba'aneh 20189, Israel.

N.B.: *Israeli embassies in different countries have been sending out their version of the Ramiya Affair. Readers coming into possession of such documents are kindly requested to send copies to 'The Other Israel', POB 956, Tel-Aviv 61008.*

■ On January 5, the hall of the Bograshov Gallery in Tel-Aviv was crowded as five Palestinian authors were reading from their works. Especially moving was Mawatakil Taha's cycle of subtle poems – written during his incarceration at *Ansar-3* (the Negev detention camp). Taha is at present head of the Palestinian Writers' Union.

'I am afraid!'

During the past year, the Israeli media increasingly report on a hitherto taboo subject – the mental problems of Israeli soldiers, especially those whose task is to suppress the Intifada. Several cases of soldiers suiciding made it impossible to continue ignoring the subject. The following is excerpted from an interview with Border Guard recruit Udi Avraham, published in Hadashot, January 3, 1992.

"I was conscripted in July 1988. After a series of checks and tests I was classified among those "fully fit for combat duty". Representatives from different units came and tried to get us to join their battalions. I chose to volunteer for the Border Guards. Four weeks later, I had my first encounter with the Intifada. Buses arrived at the training camp, and we were brought to Silwan Village in East Jerusalem. We were sent in to disperse the rioters. There were burning tyres everywhere. Within seconds I and one other recruit found ourselves cut off among a thousand rioters. All the other soldiers had run away. Somehow we got out of there and back to the base.

This was the beginning of what became a routine. We were training, and suddenly the buses would come and pick us up to fight rioters somewhere. There was much fear among us. I prayed every morning that the buses would not come, that we would just have a day of training and nothing more. When I heard the buses arriving I felt sick.

In November, they sent us to Taibeh, which is inside the Green Line, but for us it was just another Arab town with rioters. The police came there to destroy houses built without permit, and we had to protect the police. We run into the demonstration and beat with our clubs in all directions. We saw a young guy hiding in a garden. The officer said: *He is the chief agitator. We run and beat him with the clubs. He cried: I am afraid, I am afraid! We dragged him bleeding to the car.*

At home on leave I couldn't sleep. I had outbursts of rage against my family and friends. I could no longer control myself. My father tried to talk to me. I decided to tell my commanding officer openly that I was afraid. He just said: *the word "fear" does not exist in my dictionary.* I went to the Mental Health Officer and he told me that there was nothing he could do for me.

In the whole unit the atmosphere was tense. Two recruits were sent to prison for refusing to participate in actions in the Territories. Soldiers regularly threatened to kill each other over trivial things. There were also threats of suicide. Some soldiers wetted their beds at night and felt extremely embarrassed about it. After some more raids in the Territories the moment came where I decided to refuse. I was twice sent to prison.

My father became worried. He talked with the Border Guard Mental Health Officer. This man complained to my father that he was overworked; that some fifteen percent of the Border Guard recruits needed mental help. Meanwhile they

continued sending me to the Territories. My father again prevailed upon the Mental Health Officer, who in the end met with me and diagnosed "a borderline personality". My medical profile was lowered and I was sent to the Tzrifin Camp south of Tel-Aviv, to do cleaning and maintenance work.

The Sergeant-Major in Tzrifin – who knew that I had come there through a psychiatric intervention – used to call me *Crazy One*. Nearly every night he ordered me to stand guard duty. I told him I would do any work, no matter how hard or dirty, but I would not take a weapon in my hands. I was punished again and again. I ran away from the camp, and the military police came to arrest me. After my prison term I again had confrontations with the Sergeant-Major, and was again sent to prison, or escaped, and so it went on and on. My father started to write letters to the military authorities demanding to see the officers. As a result, when I was in prison, the Prison Commandant denied him the right to visit me.

After a year in and out of prison I was sent by the army to a mental hospital. I spent two and a half months there and then went home. I am still a soldier, but I have heard nothing from the army in many months."

Asked by Hadashot for his comment, the IDF spokesman declared that Udi Avraham was to be permanently discharged, since "a psychiatric committee has determined that his continued military service may constitute a danger to his own life and to others."

■ Lieutenant-Colonel Adi Hadar, served for a year and half as the chief military doctor of the Ketziot Detention Camp (*Ansar-3*). He appeared as a defence witness in the trial of an officer who had been charged for mistreating Palestinian prisoners. In his testimony he stated that guarding the prisoners caused the soldiers great mental strain. There had been several cases of reservist guards who collapsed and were taken to mental hospital (16.1.1992).

■ In 1971, then nineteen-year old conscript Doron Vilner – son of Communist Knesset Member Me'ir Vilner – was among the very first Israelis to refuse military service in the Occupied Territories. The case, at that time quite unique, got the attention of the highest echelons; Vilner met with the general in charge of the army's manpower division, and was given a written promise that he would not be ordered to serve beyond the Green Line.

For twenty years, also when Vilner became a reservist, this promise was kept. But in November 1991, one week after the Madrid Conference, Vilner was ordered to serve in Gaza – which he refused. Thus, after ten years of having been the moving spirit behind the Yesh Gvul Tel-Aviv branch, Doron Vilner for the first time himself entered the gates of the Athlit Military Prison, to serve a 28-day term.

On December 7, dozens of Yesh Gvul supporters climbed as usual (but for the first time without Doron Vilner) the mountain overlooking the Athlit Prison. Friends called their greetings through a powerfull loudspeaker, and Vilner answered by waving a towel, standing in front of his tent at the prison compound.

Then, the loudspeakers broadcast a recording of the popular singer of love songs Zehava Ben: a gesture towards the other prisoners (and the prison guards).

Contact: *Yesh Gvul, POB 4172, Tel-Aviv 61047.*

■ The Ma'asiyahu prison, where Abie Nathan is held, is on all sides surrounded by land belonging to the Israeli Prisons Authority. Therefore, solidarity demonstrations – such as took place weekly two years ago under the windows of Nathan's cell at Eyal Prison – have virtually been made impossible. On the evening of December 7, however, the Ma'asiyahu Prison guards were taken by surprise by a large group of Yesh Gvul activists, who arrived there directly from the Athlit Prison demonstration. Under cover of darkness, the activists approached the perimeter fence near Nathan's cell and shouted: *Three cheers for Abie Nathan!* The prison guards who arrived at the scene could only gape as the activists sung peace songs for a quarter of an hour, and departed.

■ On January 8, four reservists – including one officer – were imprisoned, to 28 days each, for their refusal to serve in the Occupied Territories. All of them were new names for Yesh Gvul. 31-year old Noam Cohen and 23-year old Barak Adorin both serve in an elite paratrooper unit. In such units the pressure upon the refuser is bigger. But Cohen and Adorin were no longer sensitive to the appeal made upon their *esprit de corps*.

Abie Nathan

– prisoner of peace –

Since October 10, the 64-year old Abie Nathan is sharing a prison cell with four condemned murderers and one big-time drug pusher. Sentenced to one and half year for breaking the "Anti-Terrorism Act" i.e. conducting one of his private peace talks with Yasser Arafat), Abie Nathan is, three months later, still holding the full attention of the media. The editorial pages are full of well-considered articles by prominent jurists in support of pardoning Nathan. On the news pages every little conflict which he has with the Prison Authorities is reported in minute detail. Unlike other prisoners, his right for free telephoning was curtailed, when the authorities got upset by his frequent calls to journalists and Knesset Members and were worried that he might contact, through the prison telephone, his Palestinian friends in East Jerusalem; therefore, they confiscated his address book, to return it only after his official protest, and with many pages torn out; now he has permission to call only "relatives and close friends".

As only three persons a week can visit Nathan, during a 30 minute *visiting hour*, the waiting list – on which many prominent names appear – is growing enormously. Furthermore, the prison is flooded with letters and telegrams. Nathan received sympathetic messages even from such groups as the Likud-affiliated Betar Youth. He was also adopted as a Prisoner of Conscience by Amnesty International.

On November 3, there was a public outcry after television showed Abie Nathan brought handcuffed to the Tel-Aviv Magistrate's Court – where a new trial, for yet another meeting with Arafat, was due to begin. The police claimed that handcuffing prisoners who are taken to court is a standard procedure. Press photographers, however, produced evidence that this procedure was not always applied to settlers charged with murder. Meanwhile, the Attorney General decided to altogether halt the proceedings in the new Nathan case. The authorities seemingly feel no need to further prolong Nathan's *one-man show in prison*.

Twenty-seven Knesset Members have signed a petition calling for Abie Nathan's release. They also negotiated on this issue with the president. President Haim Herzog, for his part, seems willing to grant Nathan a pardon – provided that he expresses contrition. This condition Nathan finds totally unacceptable: *I have been told that when out of prison I must not talk to the PLO, and here I am told that I must not talk to Palestinians in Jerusalem. They decide with whom I may talk. At the end I will be told to just stop talking and shut my mouth* (from Nathan's prison diary, published in *Hadashot*, 18.11.1991).

The Labor Party conference in November, scene of an intensive struggle between Doves and Hawks, adopted a resolution supporting the abolition of the law which prohibits meetings with the PLO. Several journalists reported that *Abie's invisible presence was felt in the conference hall*. The conference also voted to remove the clause 'There shall be no negotiations with the terrorist PLO', which appeared in all Labor Party platforms since 1967.

Subsequently, Labor's Yossi Beilin, Uzi Bar'am and Michael Bar-Zohar submitted a bill to the Knesset, proposing to limit the prohibition on meetings with the PLO only to cases where such meetings were conducted with the intent to harm Israel's security. On the morning of December 25, when this bill was due to be voted upon, dozens of Nathan's youthful supporters picketed the Knesset for hours, in the rain and snow of an unusually cold Israeli winter. Voting on the bill was, however put off for several weeks.

When it was finally brought to a vote, on January 15, the government mobilised its forces; the bill was defeated by 44 votes to 36. Thus, Abie Nathan is likely to celebrate his 65th birthday behind bars.

P.S. On the afternoon of January 15, the mayors of Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv and Herzlia came to President Herzog's residence, bringing him a letter from Abie Nathan officially asking for a pardon. Israeli news services, covering this event, remarked that Nathan's letter expressed no contrition over his meetings with Arafat. The president's response is not yet known. Letters to: *President Haim Herzog, Presidential mansion, 3 Hanasi St. Jerusalem 92188; fax 972.2.610037* Letters of solidarity to: *Abie Nathan, Ma'asiyahu prison, P.O.B. 13, Ramlah 72150, Israel.*

■ On the evening of December 7, a Peace Now Youth group, seeking to express solidarity with Abie Nathan, found itself involved in a violent clash. The

Peace Now youths, when lighting *Hanukka candles for Abie* at Tel-Aviv's Dizengoff Circle, were assaulted by some of the loafers who habitually sit near the fountain. Though most of the candles were snatched and snuffed out, the young peace activists stood their ground, chanting *Free Abie Nathan!*

Massarwa's ongoing struggle

Trade-unionist and political activist Mahmoud Massarwa, a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship, has been in prison since June 1988*. A ten-year sentence was imposed upon him for espionage, after the court rejected his plea that a confession had been extracted from him by force. There was much international attention for this case of a man apparently victimised for his political ideas. Moreover, Massarwa's alleged act of espionage consisted of an attempt to send to a British newspaper a classified document regarding the Israeli police involvement in the killing of Palestinian prisoners.

From the start the prison authorities severely curtailed his rights as a prisoner. In May 1991, Massarwa lodged an appeal regarding his prison conditions. The court postponed hearings on his request to have the right to home leave, and phone calls – rights granted to other prisoners. The judge did order the prison authorities to stop interfering with Massarwa's right to receive books and to send and receive letters. However, this order was not implemented in practice, and the prison authorities continue to prevent visitors from giving him books, cloths etc.

In June 1991, Massarwa was moved to Ashmoret Prison. There, he is kept locked up for 22 hours a day, with a Russian cellmate who speaks no Hebrew. When allowed out, Massarwa is forbidden to speak to other prisoners, and they are forbidden to speak to him. Massarwa protested by wearing a gag when on his daily exercise hour. The prison authorities responded by placing him in solitary confinement for a week, the first two days without a mattress.

After many delays, the case of the home leave and phone calls came back to the Tel-Aviv District Court on January 8, 1992. Judge Ben Shlomo rejected the appeal. Giving these rights to Massarwa, so the state claimed, would constitute *a danger to state security*. Asked by Adv. Avigdor Feldman, Massarwa's attorney, the state representative stated that it would be dangerous to let Massarwa telephone, even if his calls would be monitored and taped. To substantiate these claims, secret evidence was produced which even Massarwa and his lawyer were not allowed to see. We therefore can only guess what it is about. Could it be that Mahmoud Massarwa's voice is of such a pitch as would damage the whole system of Israel's telephone network?

On March 10, the Supreme Court is due to hear Massarwa's appeal against his conviction.

Letters to: *Mahmoud Massarwa, Ashmoret Prison, POB 86, Netanya 42100; copies to: Mahmoud Massarwa Defence Campaign, POB 26097, Tel-Aviv.*

* See TOI-34, p.4; TOI-38, p.12; TOI-41, p.11; TOI-48, p.10.



Open letters

This letter to President George Bush was sent on January 7 and quoted on the next day in all of Israel's main newspapers, following the publication of statistics indicating that 583,000 (18%) of the Israelis are living below the official poverty line.

Mr. President

We who write you are activists of the Slum Action Center in Jerusalem.

We regret to note that our government, in its allocation of budgets, is giving preferential treatment to settlers in the Occupied Territories and to small parties and interest groups whose support is needed to preserve its parliamentary majority. This misallocation of resources is causing grave suffering to the poor sections of Israeli society, whose situation is rapidly deteriorating. Many children in today's Israel do not get even one decent meal a day.

For the sake of the friendship between our countries, and for the sake of social justice, we call upon you to earmark a particular part of the aid which you give to Israel for the particular purpose of fighting poverty; that you insist upon this money being used to help the poorer sections of Israeli society, as defined by the Israeli Social Insurance Institute; and that you make it impossible for the government to divert any part of this money to the settlements.

We are certain that the Israeli public will appreciate such a step on your part, and regard it as the act of a true ally, aimed at saving Israel from the social explosion and turmoil which are likely to follow the present government policies.

Yours, Se'adia Marciano

Chairperson of the Slum Action Center

Slum Center, 1 Luntz St., Room 151, Jerusalem 94626.

The following letter was sent by TOI-editor Adam Keller to Representative Lee Hamilton on November 19, 1991:

Dear Mr. Hamilton,

The Israeli press reported prominently your intention to vote for granting the Israeli government ten billion Dollars in Housing Loan Guarantees, when the matter comes up in Congress – even if no conditions are made regarding the way in which the money is to be used by the Shamir government. I would like to ask you to reconsider this position.

As you know, a Conference for Peace in The Middle East was convened a short time ago at Madrid, of which the U.S. Government was the initiator and prime mover. So far, little progress has been achieved. It is open to question whether the diplomatic process started by that conference could, even under the best of conditions, lead to the creation of a true and lasting peace in our region. One thing is, in my

view, crystal clear: the granting of the Loan Guarantees to Israel, without strictly requiring our right-wing nationalist government to desist from all settlement activities in the Occupied Territories, would mean an immediate and total collapse of all diplomatic efforts.

The unconditional granting of Loan Guarantees would be correctly interpreted by Ariel Sharon and other hardliners as a U.S. licence to accelerate the brutal confiscation of Palestinian lands and the creation of Jewish settlements upon them. That would mean a total discrediting of the present Palestinian leadership, which has staked its personal and political future upon the Madrid Process.

Instead, the most intransigent forces among the Palestinians and in the Arab World would come to the fore, and lash out in violent attacks, whose targets are likely to be American as well as Israeli. Soon, the whole region would be caught in a mounting escalation towards all-out war.

You are a well-known and much respected Member of Congress, and your positions on the Middle East are influential in shaping U.S. policy with regard to our region; the responsibilities thrust upon you are correspondingly great. Your friendship towards Israel is also well-known. It is precisely because of your being a friend of Israel that I, an Israeli, call upon you not to do our country the grave disservice of giving a free hand to the enemies of peace. I call upon you to help our people – and the other peoples of this long-suffering region – achieve the peace for which they long and which they deserve.

Yours, Adam Keller

■ Upper Nazareth was created in 1955, on confiscated Arab land, to be a purely Jewish town, which would help in the "Judaisation of the Galilee". Though the town now has a considerable Arab population, the mayor has enacted a municipal by-law requiring all posters hung on municipal billboards to have Hebrew text on at least two-thirds of their surface. An Arab company whose advertisements were rejected made an appeal to the Supreme Court on January 8, represented by Adv. Pinhas Marinski, known as Abie Nathan's attorney. He brought proof that the Upper Nazareth municipality itself is publishing posters in Russian only!

■ On Friday and Saturday, December 29 and 30, hundreds of women activists participated in the yearly two-day series in Jerusalem of lectures and actions. As usual, foreign women peace activists especially from Europa were also present.

The intended nightly vigil in front of the Prime Minister's Residence had to be canceled because of extremely bad weather, but on Friday a massive picketing of the Russian Compound Police Headquarters did take place. It is a place of horror for many Palestinians who have been "interrogated" there. On December 31, Israeli papers had photographs of women who had symbolically tied themselves with nylon ropes.