



The Other Israel

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for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

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Phone/fax: (03) 5565804

Editor: Adam Keller

Assistant editor: Beate Zilversmidt

Editorial Board: Uri Avnery, Matti Peled, Yaakov
Arnon, Haim Bar'am, Yael Lotan, Yossi Amitay

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BY A THIN THREAD

With each round of the Madrid-Washington-Moscow peace talks, interest is further waning among both Israelis and Palestinians. No longer are Tel-Avivians sitting glued to their television sets, trying not to miss a single detail; and the Gazan youths, who last November handed olive branches to Israeli soldiers, are again engaged in violent - often deadly - clashes with the same.

The negotiations have become totally deadlocked, after the two sides made their positions clear: the Israeli negotiators unwilling even to contemplate the possibility of withdrawal from any occupied territory; the Arab negotiators - equally unwilling to make any move towards peace without a clear Israeli commitment to such a withdrawal. In theory, Israeli-Palestinian negotiations should have been able to proceed, since both sides agreed in advance to talk only about an interim agreement and leave for later discussion the definite status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In practice, however, interim proposals inevitably foreshadow ultimate solutions.

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The Palestinian proposal envisages a legislative council, elected by universal suffrage and appointing a smaller executive body. The elected body would possess full authority over land, water and natural resources - though it would not be recognised as a sovereign state and though Israeli military forces and Israeli settlers will continue to be present, during the interim period, at various spots in the territory.

In Shamir's counter proposal, Israel will continue to control the land and the water and apportion greater and greater pieces of them to ever-new Israeli settlers - though Arab officials will exercise authority in some civil matters, graciously delegated to them by the Israeli military governor.

Though making no headway on the main issues, the Palestinian negotiators did obtain some modest diplomatic achievements: they are now practically accepted as a separate delegation, and even the Israeli team has almost completely dropped the pretence of a "Jordanian-Palestinian" delegation.

Also, after their demonstratively staying away from the Moscow talks, the Palestinians won American support for their elementary demand that Palestinian refugees, representing the Palestinian Diaspora, will actually be allowed to participate in the deliberations of the multilateral working group on The Refugee Problem.

Such diplomatic achievements make, however, not the slightest difference to those under occupation; if anything, their situation is worsening. The Israeli right-wing feels great apprehension that the negotiations will, after all, bring about an eventual Israeli withdrawal - and do all in their power to prevent such an outcome. The confiscation of Palestinian lands and the construction of Israeli settlements are accelerated, with the settlers and Housing Minister Sharon in a frenzy to create as many accomplished facts as possible while they still can.

At the same time, clashes with the population are becoming more and more violent, with new military orders giving soldiers more "freedom to shoot". At the same time, the Knesset passed a law re-defining "self-defence" in such a way that armed settlers become practically immune from prosecution for the shooting of Palestinians. Moreover, the army's "special units" - trained to disguise themselves in Arab clothing, penetrate Arab towns, and locate "wanted" Palestinians - have increased the frequency and deadliness of their raids; more and more often, the ominous phrase *shot while trying to escape* occurs in official army communiqués.

According to Palestinian leader Feisal Husseini, eighteen Palestinians were killed in such raids during the period since the Madrid Conference*. Israeli human rights workers tend to agree with Husseini that at least some of these killings were, in fact, extra-legal executions (*see box on p.2*). Actually, Prime Minister Shamir and various of his ministers have, on more than one occasion, declared that *terrorists should not walk away alive when they encounter our forces*.

Unable to show their people any concrete result coming from the negotiations, members of the Palestinian delegation are in danger of losing their credibility - while opponents of the peace process, led by the radical Muslim " Hamas " movement, are

gaining ground. Immediately after Madrid, supporters of the Palestinian participation dominated even the streets of the Gaza Strip refugee camps, stronghold of the Muslim fundamentalists; after a further four months of fruitless negotiations and bloody repression, Hamas candidates won a startling victory at elections to the Chamber of Commerce in Ramallah – a town where a large Christian community lives and which is considered the most westernized of Palestinian towns, but which had just endured months of punitive curfews by the Israeli army.

The Tel-Aviv weekly *Ha'ir* (10.4.1992) made a thorough research on the killing of Jamal Rashid Ganem (23) at Shweika Village, on March 22. According to eyewitness reports, he was killed while playing football. Four soldiers broke up a game between the Shweika team and that of a neighboring village. Ganem, who was playing center-forward, was shot to death on the spot. Military sources confirmed that Jamal Rashid Ganem was killed during a football match.

Amidst a spiralling violence – spreading from the Occupied Territories to the streets of Tel-Aviv, to the Lebanese border, and even as far as Ankara and Buenos Aires – the thin thread of the negotiations has not been broken. On the Palestinian side, this has been particularly due to the leadership of Yasser Arafat, who repeatedly faced down or outmanoeuvred the challenges of the Palestinian opposition, and continued to give full backing to the Palestinian negotiators in Washington.

The spontaneous jubilation throughout the Occupied Territories, at the news that Arafat survived his plane crash in the Libyan Desert, gave a vivid demonstration of Arafat's continuing popularity among his people. But the same incident also made clear that Arafat has no obvious successor – certainly none who would enjoy the kind of prestige and general acceptance which Arafat does. Thus, the whole peace process seems to hang by a thin thread – a situation unlikely to vary until a significant change in Israeli policies provides the process with a more solid grounding.

Such a change can issue from the Israeli voters' verdict, in the general elections scheduled for June 23; alternatively, it may come about as a result of firm action by the United States – which originated and masterminded the whole diplomatic process.

** Hussein gave that information at a press conference held on March 26, in East Jerusalem.*

The ending of a special relationship

With the end of the Cold War, U.S. policy on the Middle East (as elsewhere) lost one of its motives: the frantic search for allies against "the Soviet Threat". What remained was another motive, present in the policies of imperial powers since the dawn of history – maintenance of the regional balance of power.

The shifts in American policy towards the Gulf area provide a clear illustration: Iran, a key American supporter under the Shah, was turned by Khomeini into a disruptive force, seeking to export its "Islamic Revolution" far and wide. Therefore, Saddam Hussein of Iraq was aided and abetted in waging war upon Iran. However, once Saddam Hussein developed too big an appetite, he in turn became the target of a major war, in which Hafez Assad of Syria – himself heading a regime not unlike that of Saddam – was a major U.S. ally. Then again, when the Gulf War weakened Saddam to the point that one more push may have toppled him, U.S. forces stood aside and let him butcher the rebellious Kurds and Shiites.

Israeli prime ministers always regarded themselves as being worlds away from this kaleidoscope of Middle Eastern states and rulers, falling alternately in and out of American favor. Rather, Israelis like to think of their country as belonging in the inner circle of Western democracies, firm and stable allies of the United States.

However, Israel's democratic image became considerably tarnished with the Intifada, as it became clear to foreigners – but also to many Israelis – what kind of brutal measures were needed in order to maintain Israeli rule over a million and half disenfranchised Palestinians.

Also, some commentators could not help noticing a certain similarity between the religious fanatics assuming a growing influence over Israeli governmental policies, and their counterparts among Israel's neighbors.

In the eyes of Washington policy-makers the role of Israel – with its right-wing government – became more and more a disruptive one. Israel's continued hold over the Occupied Territories keeps the Palestinians a destabilising, unpredictable force, apt to set powder kegs on fire out of sheer despair.

The Israeli nuclear capacity creates apprehensions in the Arab World, which lead Arab states to start nuclear programs of their own. The worldwide

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network of Israeli arms sales – encouraged by previous American administrations as a means of escaping Congressional control – has assumed an independent dynamic of its own, competing with American economic interests and clashing with political ones.

All in all, the Bush administration seems to have decided that Israel – no longer useful as an ally against the Soviet Union – needs a bit of curbing, to make it fit better into the New Order Middle East; by the same logic, Palestinians need some stake in the status-quo, to prevent them from overturning it.

Mixed with policy reasons was a personal resentment; Yitzchak Shamir repeatedly succeeded in rubbing George Bush and James Baker the wrong way. With a new settlement going up on the eve of each Baker visit to Jerusalem, Bush's opposition to the settlement policy in the Occupied Territories has grown into what Washington observers describe as a virtual obsession.

So far, Bush refrained from using against Shamir his sharpest weapon: the United Nations Security Council, a forum which – since the disappearance of the Soviet veto – has become a virtual American tool, obediently imposing sanctions on enemies of Washington's choice. Though supporting several resolutions condemning Israeli actions in the Occupied Territories, Bush so far took care to keep them to the level of verbal admonitions – with nothing remotely resembling, for example, the kind of sanctions recently imposed on Libya. But the threat of U.N. sanctions seems to hang in the air, should Shamir go too far – for example, by actually carrying out the deportation order issued in January against eleven Palestinian activists*.

For the time being, the area of Bush's running fight with Shamir is defined by the very nexus of closely interlinked relations, created over decades of a U.S.-Israeli *Special Relationship*.

There was a series of well-orchestrated leaks to the American media, concerning the unauthorised sale of American military technology, obtained by Israel, to the armies of Third World countries. This led to the dispatch of American inspectors to check whether all "Patriot" missile batteries – and their components – were still in Israel (they were!). Soon after, supply of American components to the Israeli Python-3 missile was stopped, amidst allegations that the missiles had been exported to Taiwan and South-Africa. At the back of all this might be the American armaments industry, which finds a years-long symbiosis with its Israeli counterpart gradually transformed into a tough competition over the shrinking global armaments market.

In the Administration's main conflict with Shamir, over his request for the ten billion Dollars in Housing Loan Guarantees, no holds were barred. Baker's terms for granting the guarantees amounted to an ultimatum: Shamir and Sharon may only complete the construction of some 6000 housing units started before January 1, 1992; other than that, not a single house would be allowed at any settlement; and compliance with the total freeze would be closely

monitored and verified, by satellite and by inspection teams on the ground.

All efforts at a compromise, which would have left a few loopholes and enabled Shamir and Sharon to go on with some settlement activity, were rejected out of hand. (Nor was Baker swayed by the allegations that he had used a four letter word with reference to Jews.)

Shamir being unwilling to comply with Baker's conditions, the guarantees issue was shoved off the agenda, for at least half a year.

No U.S. president for decades has gone so far in confronting the Israeli government and its entrenched power on Capitol Hill – certainly not in an election year, when U.S. politicians are usually busy courting the Jewish vote. Bush could not have done it, either, but for two factors: that the Israeli settlement policy is very controversial even in the mainstream Jewish community (whose support, in any case, goes mainly to Democratic candidates); and that in a crisis-ridden, inwardly-looking America, all foreign aid – including Loan Guarantees to Israel – is highly unpopular.

With the U.S. elections but half a year away, the Bush administration is now making some conciliatory statements towards the Shamir government and its American allies. Vice-president Dan Quail took the trouble to attend the AIPAC conference in Washington, where he spoke about the U.S. and Israel being "friends and allies forever". Nevertheless, the administration does not budge on the settlements or other substantial issues.

Should Bush be re-elected – and should Israeli governmental policies continue on their present intransigent course – further pressure can be expected. For example, not only the Loan Guarantees, but also the normal annual aid to Israel – three billion Dollars – might become dependent upon a settlement freeze.

It is no wonder that Shamir and his associates – who but a short time ago held up the U.S. Republican Party as an example to be emulated – are now desperately hoping for the victory of the Democratic candidate – any candidate at all, as long as Bush is defeated. (The same hopes are probably harboured by two other Middle East leaders... Saddam Hussein of Iraq and Mu'ammar Khadafi of Libya.)

The most crucial elections

Yitzchak Shamir is facing an electoral campaign of his own, in which his chances are far from rosy. Having had to choose between his ideology and the money desperately needed by the Israeli economy, Shamir chose the former – a choice perhaps doing credit to his personal integrity, but not easy to explain to Israeli voters hard hit by economic recession, with fast rising unemployment figures. Even for many traditional Likud voters, Jewish settlement on Biblically-hallowed soil hardly merits that much of a sacrifice.

The death of the Likud's Founding Father, former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, brought tens of thousands of mourners into the streets. It also underlined the fact that the present Likud has no

leader of Begin's calibre, capable of skilfully blending conservatism, nationalism and populism into the powerful mixture which swept the Likud Party to power in 1977.

Now, the same party is locked in a deep crisis, which threatens to tear it apart; what started as one more of the notorious power struggles between the Likud party factions developed into a crisis over extremely sensitive issues. The strongest challenge to Shamir's leadership came from Foreign Minister David Levy, a relative moderate, and the only Likud leader who seems genuinely enthusiastic about the peace process.

Moreover, Levy is a Moroccan Jew, representative of the poor Oriental Jewish voters who constitute the bulk of the Likud voters – and who stand to lose the most from the economic crisis and the loss of the Loan Guarantees. Levy's public accusations that fellow Likud ministers had called him *a stinking Moroccan and a monkey who came down from the trees* struck deep chords among a community which remains at the unprivileged bottom of Israeli society, forty-three years after its arrival in Israel.

In a last-minute effort, Shamir succeeded in mollifying Levy and preventing his resignation from the cabinet – but only at the cost of alienating other Likud factions, particularly the one headed by Defence Minister Moshe Arens.

The opposition Labor Party seems poised to benefit by the Likud disarray. The party made a good public impression by the apparent success of its primary elections – for Israel, a completely new experiment in internal party democracy, enabling all 162,000 registered Labor members to take part in electing the Party Chief and the parliamentary candidates.

The chosen Party Chief, Yitzhak Rabin, has a hawkish image, especially considering his sanguinary record as Defence Minister in the early part of the Intifada. This the party hopes to make into an asset which will attract disappointed Likud voters. On the other hand, Rabin has made a public commitment to achieve, within six to nine months of becoming Prime Minister, an agreement with the Palestinians; and he does have several prominent Doves on his team.

As things now stand, Labor and its allies to the left seem to have a good chance of obtaining at least a narrow parliamentary majority. However, the general elections are scheduled for June 23 – leaving the Likud still a lot of time to get its act together. Moreover, a military flareup on one of Israel's borders, or an attack by Palestinians leaving civilian casualties, could just before elections day swing crucial Knesset seats back to the Likud and the extreme right.

Also, nobody can predict, with any certainty, how the 400,000 immigrants from the former Soviet Union – who now comprise a full 10% of the electorate – will vote. Many of the immigrants seem influenced by the kind of nationalism which infects most ethnic groups in their former homeland; but immigrants who live under conditions of extreme poverty, with a much higher unemployment rate than among other Israelis, did notice that Shamir forfeited the Loan Guarantees which were needed for the immigrants'

own benefit. The situation is further complicated by the appearance of several independent "Russian" parties of which neither the political program nor the electoral chances are clear.

Recent opinion polls indicate that a majority of the immigrants – and of the general public – intend to vote for Labor and the parties to its left. However, the recent British elections have shown how misleading opinion polls can be – as did some previous Israeli elections.

One thing, however, could already be said with certainty: in no election campaign since 1967 have the Israeli voters been so clearly confronted with the sharp choices facing their country.

The editor

** The Shamir government, aware of possible consequences, seems in no hurry to complete proceedings in the Palestinian deportees' appeal to the Supreme Court in Jerusalem. Moreover, the Military Appeals Committee revoked the deportation order against one of the original twelve deportees, Iyad Joudeh – the first time since 1979 that a deportation order has been revoked. In an effort to end the affair quietly the government is offering that the other eleven go 'voluntarily' into exile and, in reward, be allowed back after five years.*

The Rafah mutiny

On April 3, the first page of *Ma'ariv* bore the headline: *Soldiers mutiny in the Gaza Strip. Sixteen went home.* The article identified the unit involved as one of the Territories Companies – the new units founded in 1990, for the express purpose of fighting the Intifada; the soldiers spend nine months a year at this task, the rest being spent at training.

Ma'ariv military correspondent Immanuel Rosen had provided his (generally right-wing) paper with an enormous scoop. During several days the mutiny continued to make headlines. The television news disclosed that it occurred at a Rafah military camp.

The town of Rafah, in the southern end of the Gaza Strip, has become well-known in the years of the Intifada, because of the many riots in the town's refugee camps. In the latest clash, only two days previous to the mutiny, four Palestinians had been shot to death and eighty wounded – which earned Israel another reprimand from the U.N. Security Council. (With all the attention given in the Israeli media both to the Rafah deaths and to the Rafah mutiny, the two remained usually unlinked.)

Gradually, more facts about the circumstances of the mutiny surfaced. It appears that, following the Rafah riots, the company went back to its base. The soldiers expected to get some rest, but were instead ordered to do heavy fatigue duties, including standing sentry for 12 continuous hours and working in the base kitchen. The soldiers' complaints were pushed aside contemptuously by the commanding officer. As one soldier put it: *We decided to mutiny, because nobody took us seriously.*

Sixteen soldiers – all of them veterans who had been in the company since its formation – went away together. *We told the Company Commander that we*

were going because we couldn't bear it any more. He said nothing and just watched us go.

Military sources, quoted in *Ma'ariv* (5.4.'92) stated that the commanding officer would be replaced, as he had proved himself incapable of retaining the faith of the soldiers under his command. Some of the soldiers' parents contacted Meretz KM Yossi, Sarid who promised to bring up the issue on the Knesset floor.

On April 5, the sixteen soldiers convened at the house of one of them, decided that their purpose was achieved, and went back to their unit. By the letter of the Military Criminal Code, all of them were liable to be court-martialed for mutiny and receive years-long sentences. But only the minor charge of being absent without leave was brought against them, and the affair was promptly closed by sentencing them on the spot to 25 or 28 days' imprisonment.

Immanuel Rosen disclosed in that day's *Ma'ariv* that this was not the first such case; in fact, since 1988, seven mutinies have taken place in various units of the Israeli army, though most of the previous ones did not get media attention. The individuals involved always got the 28-day punishment – except for one case where a commanding officer was physically assaulted. All of the mutinies broke out in protest against specific abuses in the units concerned, and no objection to the occupation as such was heard. Nevertheless, Rosen notes, the phenomenon was nearly unknown in the IDF before the Intifada, and all but one of the mutinies broke out in units directly involved with putting down the Palestinian uprising.

■ On March 31, BBC television broadcast a 47-minute film by Israeli reserve soldier Yishai Shuster, made during his tour of duty at Hebron on the West Bank. With his video camera he recorded clashes with stone-throwing boys, the humiliation of Palestinian by-passers at the roadblock, the racist remarks of settlers, and the grumbling of his fellow soldiers.

Following the British screening of the film, the Israeli army announced that Shuster's "unauthorised filming" was a breach of military law, but the military attorney decided not to prosecute him. The film's "illegality" was, however, reason for Ya'akov Lorberboim, Director of the Israeli Television, to forbid the screening of an interview with Shuster, including excerpts from his film.

Shuster did receive numerous invitations from Israeli groups to come, speak and show his film. One of the invitations was from the Hebron settlers...

■ The American city of Santa Cruz, California, officially proclaimed April 2 to be **Yesh Gvul Day**. It was stated that **Yesh Gvul** members are deserving of this honour because they have *demonstrated their patriotism and willingness to defend their country, while refusing to participate in an offensive war in Lebanon, and also refusing to carry out the policies of an unjust military occupation*. The proclamation was issued by Mayor Don Lane on the occasion of a visit by **Yesh Gvul** member Yigal Ezrati, himself a veteran

of the Israeli military prison system.

The reception in Santa Cruz was actually an exuberant expression of what was felt throughout Ezrati's three-week North American speaking tour. Both inside and outside the Jewish community, mainstream groups have shown much more appreciation for the refusal of Israeli soldiers to serve in the Occupied Territories, at the risk of going to prison.

At the Leo Baeck Synagogue, a major Los Angeles congregation, Ezrati addressed the worshippers from the pulpit during their Friday evening ceremony. and at the University of California Berkeley, the University of Wisconsin Madison and Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ezrati's appearances were co-hosted by the **Hillel** Jewish student organization.

Contact: Yesh Gvul, POB 6953 Jerusalem 91068, Israel. or: Friends of Yesh Gvul, 1678 Shattuck Ave., Box #6, Berkeley, CA 94709, U.S.A.

Walk for Peace

A six-day Walk for a Peaceful Future in the Middle East is planned for June 1992, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Six-Day-War. The walk will take place in Israel and the Occupied Territories, ending in Jerusalem.

The walk is expected to bring in numerous American and European peace activists and is supported by an impressive list of personalities from the European, American, Israeli and Palestinian peace movement. The TOI-staff took an active part in helping to organise the participation of Israeli groups. **Yesh Gvul** and **Women in Black** representatives are co-sponsoring the walk, as are individual members of **Peace Now**. On the Palestinian side could be found such names as Feisal Hussein and Mubarak Awad.

The declaration uniting all participants states that *a durable solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – which is at the center of tensions which are a threat to the future of (...) [more than the region alone] – has to be based on meeting the aspirations of both the Israeli and the Palestinian people to self-determination, national independence, international recognition and security.*

Furthermore, the walkers for peace consider that *the best assurance of genuine security and freedom lies in harmonious relations founded on mutual acceptance.*

During the walk – which will pass some prisons – special solidarity will be shown towards prisoners for peace – Palestinians or Israelis – *who have lost their freedom [or more] (...) for defending the cause of peace and justice through non-violent means.*

A commitment to cordial and nonviolent behaviour during the walk is a prerequisite.

European contact:

Bela Bathia and Jean Drèze, Walk for Peace c/o 55 Dawes Street, London SE17 1EL, UK phone: 44.71.703.7189; fax: 44.71.708.2545.

American contact:

Kathy Kelly, 1460 West Carmen, Chicago IL 60640, USA phone: 1.312.784.8065; fax: 1.312.282.9033.

Battle of the trees

A few months ago inhabitants of the West Bank settlement Alon-Moreh uprooted olive trees belonging to their Palestinian neighbors. Soon after, new ones were planted by a delegation of the Mapam and Ratz parties. This was the start of a prolonged battle. The settlers uprooted the new seedlings, claiming that *the trees would give cover to terrorist ambushes*. The left-wingers did not give up easily, and planted yet new trees – which were again uprooted. After this was repeated three times, the settlers decided to desist; they felt embarrassed being depicted in the media as tree-destroyers. (The planting of trees is still a potent symbol of the Zionist pioneering ethos.)

The next round in "The Battle of the Trees" occurred on Tu Bish'vat, the Jewish religious Feast of the Trees, which fell this year on January 20. At various settlements on the West bank, seedlings were ceremoniously planted. Speeches were made by Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir, other government ministers and the leaders of the extreme right, all of them singing the praise of increased Jewish settlement – the new trees being the symbol of *Jewish roots penetrating the soil of Judea and Samaria*.

At the same time, a different kind of planting ceremony took place at East Jerusalem's Silwan Village. Members of Palestinian families, recently dispossessed by settlers (see TOI-49: p. 8; 50: p. 5-6) had dug forty holes in the ground. A group from the religious Netivot Shalom movement arrived with olive seedlings and planted them together with the Palestinians.

Yohanán Floser spoke for Netivot Shalom: *We want to express our religious-moral responsibility for the country and for the next generation. This Tu Bish'vat planting will become a blessing and not a curse, and will further a honourable coexistence in Jerusalem.*

Yusuf Kara'in of Silwan replied: *Between religious Zionists like you and us Palestinians, a peaceful coexistence can indeed be forged.*

Contact: Netivot Shalom, POB 4433, Jerusalem 91043

Human Rights struggle

■ The extra hardships of prisoners during the extremely cold winter in the Middle East did not get much public attention. In Hasharon Prison, north of Tel-Aviv, 68 women – aged from 14 to 48 – were held in cells with broken windows. A months-long struggle of the Israeli support group Women for Political Prisoners (WOFPP) – including an appeal to the Minister of Police via KM Tamar Gozanski – resulted in the windows being repaired, though only at the beginning of March. Meanwhile WOFPP used donations to buy extra blankets for the prisoners.

WOFPP lawyer Yosepha Pick – who was for ten months denied access to the prisoners – was allowed in again, at the beginning of April, and was welcomed with tears of joy.

A request made by WOFPP resulted in a Red Cross donation of 160 books to the Hasharon Prison

Library. Also donated were games and exercise equipment.

WOFPP's English-language newsletter is available from: POB 31811, Tel-Aviv 61318.

■ In January the Rabbis for Human Rights – together with Christian and Muslim clerics – made an appeal to the Supreme Court. The court was urged to lift the night curfew imposed upon the town of Ramallah. Beginning every day at 6 in the afternoon, the curfew was already in force for more than a month, following two weeks of total day and night curfew, which had started at December 1 (see TOI-50, p.2).

The appellants claimed that the curfew was not imposed for military reasons, but as a collective punishment, to which the government had been pressured by the extreme right after the killing of an Israeli settler in the area. It was also asserted that the curfew prevented both Christians and Muslims from observing religious ceremonies.

On January 28, military representatives presented to the judges secret evidence, containing details of the "security considerations" requiring that the night curfew continue at least during the whole month of February. Unlike other cases where secret evidence is presented, the judges were only partially convinced, ordering the army to lift the curfew on February 11. This was the first time that the Supreme Court interfered with the imposition of curfews in the Occupied Territories.

Contact: Rabbis for Human Rights, POB 32225, Jerusalem 91999.

■ On January 21, Israeli and Palestinian Physicians Human Rights Association (AIPPHR) received a request for help from Amsa Fouad of Nablus, who urgently had to undergo a kidney transplant. In order to have a tissue test done prior to the transplant, he had to go to a clinic inside Israel. For that he addressed the military government's Civil Administration – whose financial officer has to decide whether a treatment in Israel will be paid for. Amsa, who had been paying the *medical insurance for residents of the Territories* since 1978, was told that there was no money and that he should try again in a month. After AIPPHR approached the Civil Administration's health officer, Amsa Fouad's request was met immediately.

□ On Saturday, February 1, 1992, AIPPHR organised a visit of Israeli doctors and nurses, together with Palestinian doctors, to K'far A'lar in the Tul-Karm area. Usually, the 5000 inhabitants of the village have to go to the Tul-Kar'm hospital for medical treatment. During the five hour visit five hundred residents were examined, particularly women, children and elderly. AIPPHR's English-language newsletter is available from: POB 10235 Tel-Aviv 61101.

■ More than a year after the Gulf War, its effects are still felt by thousands of Palestinian workers who, in March 1991, came back to Israel and found their jobs taken by new immigrants. Many employers ignored the fact that the Occupied Territories had been under total curfew throughout the war and treated their

registered Palestinian employees as if they had just failed to come to work – thus, avoiding the severance pay required under Israeli law.

Lawyers of the **Kav La'oved** (Workers' Hotline) presented suits against such employers. The Hotline's February newsletter mentions the case of Muhammad Ata Jada, who was accepted back by his employer after the suit was presented. In several other cases, hard-pressed Palestinians settled for half the legal severance pay, in out-of-court compromises. Many cases are still pending, some of them touching a single worker, others – a hundred or more from the same workplace.

Kav La'oved's English-language newsletter is available from: POB 2319, Tel-Aviv 61022.

■ According to the **B'tzelem** Report on Torture in Israeli Prisons, published on April 1, there is a slight improvement in the treatment of prisoners by the army, but none at all – in the behavior of the Shabak (Security Service).

The main achievement of **B'tzelem** and **The Public Committee Against Torture** is that the subject is no longer a mystery-shrouded taboo in Israeli politics. No less than nineteen Knesset members of the Labor, Meretz and Communist parties, made a public demand for an investigation into the February 4 death of 33-year Mustafa Akawi, while in Shabak custody at Hebron Prison. Though it does not bring Akawi back to life, at least his case got far more attention than any previous case of the kind.

Eventually, an American pathologist was brought in. He determined that Akawi must have suffered from a heart disease – which was reason enough for the government to clear his interrogators of all blame – though the pathologist also stated that Akawi's death had much to do with his being tied up for several days in a very painful position, while being exposed to zero-degree temperature.

The great publicity surrounding the Akawi case helped another prisoner, Muhammad Amin, whose lawyer appealed February 21 to the Supreme Court, stating that his client's health is frail and that conditions in the Shabak interrogation cell may cause his death. A few days later, Amin was released. The senior Shabak interrogator told him: *If you want to die, then do it at home and not here.*

Contact: B'tzelem, 18 Keren Hayesod St., Jerusalem Committee Against Torture, PB 8588, Jerusalem 91083

■ On February 2, the Tel-Aviv based **International Center for Peace** published the results of a public opinion poll conducted among a sample of 1100 Jewish Israelis: 82% declared themselves in favor of furthering the peace process; 61% supported a peace agreement involving withdrawal from most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, accompanied by security agreements; and of these, 40% affirmed that Palestinian autonomy is an indispensable stage on the way to a permanent solution. Annexation of the Territories was an alternative chosen by 18%.

■ Israeli and American industrialists recently created a fund providing a yearly budget of \$150,000 for the formation of a new think-tank in Tel-Aviv.

The directorate of the institute includes industrialists, economists, retired military officers and political figures – all of them in one way or another critical of present government policies. In a press conference the name **La'Vettach** (The Safe Side) and the aims of the newly-founded research institute were presented: research will be carried out on the allocation of resources by the Israeli government; investment in socio-economic development will be compared with that in pursuing ideological objectives.

Chair of the **La'Vettach** board is economist and senior business manager Ephraim Reiner. According to him, **La'Vettach** aims at supplementing the moral and emotional arguments used by peace activists with *hard, pragmatic evidence, proving that the government policies make no economic sense.* But **La'Vettach** will not be producing just biased, propagandistic material. Only the choice of subjects will be influenced by political views – the research itself will have to stand the strictest of academic criteria.

Aharon Dovrat of the giant "Klal" concern is one of the **La'Vettach** backers. "I have never been involved in politics," he told *Yediot Aharonot*. "But I make no secret of my views. Already in 1967 I felt that keeping the Territories would destroy our society; we should have withdrawn from them unilaterally. I am glad I found a way to help, with my prestige as a businessman and my company's money, the things I believe in." (*Yediot Aharonot*, 14.2.'92.)

■ On Saturday, February 25, a large group of Israeli women, organised by **Reshet** (Women's Peace Network), arrived at Ramallah, where they met the wives of the Palestinians slated for deportation (and held meanwhile in detention). Representatives of Palestinian women's organizations participated in the meeting, as well. At the end of the meeting the Israeli and Palestinian women together made a call upon the Israeli government to revoke the deportation orders. The meeting got an excellent coverage in the Sunday papers.

■ On March 14, the Supreme Court started hearing the appeal of writer Hagai Tyomkin against the military censorship, which forbade publication of large portions of his book *The Blue and White case*.

Tyomkin, who was for many years a member of the Israeli army's Field Security, wrote a thriller featuring operatives of the Israeli secret services. The book was already completed four years ago, but censorship so far prevented its publication. According to Tyomkin his book, though influenced by personal experience, does not contain any revelations of classified information. He claims that the censor does not accept his sarcastic tone towards Shabak and Mossad agents – who are depicted in the book not so much as heroic Supermen but rather as fallible human beings.

■ On March 10, following the death of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Likud-affiliated students at the Hebrew University lighted a memorial candle. Facing them were Jewish and Arab members of **Campus**, holding signs reading: *Light a candle for the*

victims of Deir-Yassin, Sabra and Shatila! The Likudniks took this as an insult for the deceased Begin, under whose ultimate responsibility the notorious massacres in these places had taken place. They abandoned their mourning ceremony in favor of a fistfight which ended when university security guards arrived on the spot and confiscated the placards.

□ A week later, on March 16, the same two student groups confronted each other again, now in larger numbers. The bone of contention was the Israeli national flag. For years, student clashes resulted from the flag's being used by the nationalists as their private symbol. Consequently, the university administration ruled that the national flag would be displayed permanently in several places on campus, but that it would be forbidden to display it in any other place.

In defiance of the new prohibition Likud students, accompanied by KM Haim Kofman, brought two giant flags to "The Forum", the central plaza of the Mount Scopus Campus, and hanged them on the surrounding wall. Some members of Campus, who were on the spot to distribute leaflets, succeeded in pulling down one of these. Within minutes, news of the confrontation at The Forum spread throughout the campus, and hundreds of students arrived. Across a thin human barrier of security guards, the two sides engaged for several hours in an exchange of shouts (*Traitors! – Arabs and leftists out! versus Down with the Occupation! – Intifada until Victory!*) until police, called in by the university administration, dispersed both groups.

Four students were arrested. All of them Arabs.

■ On March 16, some hundred Israeli and Palestinian youths took part in a dialogue meeting at Al-Watani Hotel in East Jerusalem, organised by Peace Now, and extensively shown on the Television News. The young diplomats were reported to have engaged in some sharp debates on the status of Jerusalem and on Jewish immigration, but to have agreed in principle on a solution based on "two states for two peoples".

■ In order to convince Jewish Israelis to settle in the Occupied Territories, the government provides those who do so with all kinds of advantages. One of these is that settlers are practically exempted from paying for education. For example, whereas normal pupils have to pay 500 NIS (\$210) for the right to enter matriculation exams, of settlers only 70 NIS is required. At a March 22 demonstration by the Israeli Teachers Association in front of the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem, one of the demands was: *Settler rates to all!*

In the town of Hod Hasharon the problem led to tensions between classmates. This is a town close to the pre-'67 border, and many settler youths are daily crossing over to study in its schools. On March 27, a petition protesting the inequality was presented to the Minister of Education, with thousands of signatures collected by Hod Hasharon pupils.

■ On March 27, a complaint arrived at the desk of Danny Yatom, General of the Israeli Army Central

Command. A group of Hebron settlers did not like the language of the soldiers, charged with protecting them. On the military communications net, expressions could be heard such as: *Here comes another bunch of fucking settlers.*

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■ On the evening of April 4 Binyamin Kahane, son of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, spoke at a racist rally in Tel-Aviv's Dizengoff circle. Kahane and his supporters were confronted by a large group of Meretz* youths, shouting: *No to racism! No to fascism! and: Enough with the bloodshed! Make peace now!* A violent clash ensued, in which the more solid signs proved useful as battering weapons. Thereupon, police forces arrived and arrested seven of the Meretz youths, who were held in detention until the following morning. A police spokesman explained that since the Kahanists had a police permit for their rally, it was the Meretz youths who were responsible for the breach of public order.

* Meretz is the new electoral alliance forged by the Mapam, Ratz and Shinuy parties.

■ On April 9, several dozen Meretz youths held a vigil at the Bat Sheva Hotel in Jerusalem, where the settlers' Judea and Samaria Council, in a joint venture with the Israeli government, established a computerised *Information Bureau* to entice Israelis to settle in the Occupied Territories.

On April 12, the Peace Now movement appealed to the Supreme court, asking to forbid the broadcasting of a *Come to the settlements* jingle on Israeli Television. Peace Now argued that the broadcast would constitute "election propaganda in favor of the pro-settlement parties", in contravention of the Election Law.

■ On March 1, the Supreme Court rejected an appeal by the inhabitants of Ramiya Village in the Galilee. The eviction order, by which the Arab villagers must vacate their homes and ancestral land where housing for immigrants is to be erected, was ruled to be legal (*see TOI-48: p.6; 49: p.9; 50: p.8-9*).

This is not the end of judicial proceedings in the Ramiya case; further appeals are possible – but are unlikely to do more than buy time, since Israeli law does give the government the right to confiscate any property for "public purposes" – and the government did use this legal power to confiscate the Ramiya lands. The only chance to save Ramiya is by public pressure, from inside and outside the country, making the political cost of its destruction prohibitive.

On March 20, two hundred Jews and Arabs held a rally at Ramiya. In a bigger rally, about a thousand participants came all the way to the village on March 30 – Land Day, proclaimed a National Holiday by the leadership of the Arabs inside Israel; and on April 11, a large group organised by Israelis and Palestinians for Non-violence participated, together with inhabitants of neighboring villages, in planting hundreds of tomato seedlings in the fields of Ramiya.

Meanwhile, the issue of Ramiya got into the section "Discrimination based on Race, Sex, Religion, Language or Social Status" in the Annual Human Rights Report published by the U.S. State Department – a far from welcome news to the Israeli government, especially at the present state of Israel-U.S. relations.

Protests to:

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

Copies to:

The Ramiya Solidarity Committee, POB 1575, Jerusalem 91014.

■ In different parts of Israel are scattered several dozen "unrecognized" Arab villages (of which Ramiya is one). Though most are not directly threatened with destruction, they lack any legal status and their inhabitants are denied water, electricity, roads and other vital services.

In February, the villagers' Association of the Forty together with the Galilee Health Organization appealed to the International Water Tribunal in the Netherlands. Though the tribunal has a purely advisory capacity, its prestige is such that the Israeli government felt compelled to send a lawyer on its behalf. After several weeks, the tribunal ruled that *All governments, including the government of Israel, must provide clean water to all inhabitants in their territory; there can be no exception to this rule.*

Water politics

Rafa'el Etan, Israel's Agriculture Minister between 1988 and 1991, thought that one way of fulfilling his task was to let his ministry publish big advertisements. Again and again ministerial ads appeared, asserting that Israel must not give up the West Bank and Golan Heights, since Israeli agriculture depends on water sources from these areas.

In November 1991, however, Etan discovered that the governmental Tahal Company, specialising in research on the development of water sources, had prepared a survey on the possibilities of cooperation with the Arab countries in the use of water, and that the survey also dealt with scenarios of Israeli withdrawal from part or all of the Occupied Territories.

Thereupon, Etan and Water Commissioner Dan Zaslowski ordered the Tahal directors to withdraw the survey – which was due to be published by the Tel-Aviv University Center for Strategic Studies – and to prepare a new version that would avoid political issues.

A new version was duly prepared, but Etan judged it to be *even worse than the first*; he then asked for the help of the military censor, who forbade publication of the survey.

All of these proceedings remained secret until March 10, 1992, when the story was leaked to *Ha'aretz* newspaper. Though the survey itself remains banned, the publication of the story sparked off an

intense public debate regarding both the political use of military censorship and the relationship between peace and water.

Former Water Commissioner Menachem Kantor expressed surprise at the censor's action. *I do not know of any hydrological information, regarding Israel and her neighbors, which was not yet internationally published. In this field, we have no secrets.*

In any case, it is only politicians who say that you can't give up territories because of the water sources in them. I know of no serious professional who would say such a thing. There are clear rules about this in International Law. Nobody can just snatch his neighbor's water sources.

We and the people in the West Bank have to cooperate and share the water equitably. (Ha'aretz, 11.3.1992.)

News from Dimona

On February 11, the Supreme Court released for publication the verdict of Justice Menachem Elon, rejecting Mordechai Vanunu's appeal to have his case heard again by a special five-judge panel. Judge Elon confirmed a previous ruling that found Vanunu guilty of *giving assistance to the enemy in time of war, and of collecting and delivering secret information without authority and with intent to impair the Security of the State*, even though Vanunu in fact had no such intention when he gave his nuclear information to the British Sunday Times. *He should have known that information given to the press would fall into the hands of all enemy countries and all of their agents.*

□ On the same day that the newspapers published Vanunu's final verdict, they also carried news of the first-ever strike by the workers at the Dimona Nuclear Pile, Vanunu's former colleagues. On February 12, the workers held a 24-hour "warning strike", in defiance of a back-to-work order from the Be'er Sheva Labor Court. Only a small skeleton crew remained to man the vital stations at the pile.

The Dimona administration reacted by accusing the workers' union leaders of being "wild law-breakers, unworthy of being entrusted with the upkeep of vital national installations." In response, the union held a press conference in Be'er Sheva, to express their grievances. The union leader (publication of whose name was forbidden by military censorship) told the journalists: *During the past years we have broken several taboos, even though we did not reveal secrets, or endanger the pile's safety; a few more taboos may get broken if this labor dispute goes on.*

The workers are bitter because their salaries have deteriorated by 20% over the last decade. Also, the Radition Law of 1981 – which grants to X-ray technicians shorter working hours, a lower retirement age, and other benefits – is not applied to workers at the Dimona pile. Finally, the workers raised the demand to have pay and working conditions equal to those of "the workers in another government department, who are doing work similar to ours, and

with whom we are cooperating daily." The Dimona unionist refused to give the name of that department. (Throughout the press conference two security officers sat in, with the avowed purpose of stopping it should any classified information be divulged.)

Neighborly meetings

At the four-day seminar of Asian NGOs at Nicosia, opened at January 20, Matti Peled represented the ICIPP. In his speech on Middle East Regional Security Arrangements, Major General (ret.) Peled explained why he thinks the current Moscow talks will not lead to significant results: not all regional powers were invited and the basic steps to be taken are not on its agenda. A real Middle East détente would require having all countries in the region open their nuclear activities to international inspection, and limiting their defence expenditure to 5% of the GNP – sufficient to keep a reasonable state of readiness, but not to let other parties feel imminent danger.

Aside from Peled, there were many other Israeli participants, such as the Communist KM Hashem Mahamid, Hana Knaz of Women in Black, Dr. Ruhama Marton of AIPPHR, and anti-fascist veteran Hans Lebrecht. Most attention during the conference went, however, to Ya'el Dayan of the Israeli Labor Party, and Moshe Amirav, who is in charge of Engineering and Transportation at the Jerusalem municipality. Both are known in Israel as prominent Doves, but they were unused to the ways of a forum where Yasser Arafat is commonly referred to as "His Excellency". The Palestinians, on their part, seemed eager enough to address and debate with "real representatives of the Israeli establishment".

Ya'el Dayan engaged in long debates on whether the epithet of "terrorist" may be attributed to Palestinians, to Israelis, to both or to neither. At the conclusion of the event, U.N. organisers felt that the introduction of Israelis closer to the mainstream was a useful addition to the NGO conference format, which began to stagnate in recent years.

The Nicosia meeting also brought the Israelis into contact with the town's large Palestinian community. Thanks to a liberal Cypriot governmental policy towards Palestinians (including those with only refugee documents), Nicosia has become a true center of Palestinian cultural life. Dozens of Palestinian newspapers, magazines, publishing houses and research institutes have sprung up. The Israelis received many invitations to Palestinian homes, where they soon found themselves taking part in the ongoing debate on the peace process.

Until this year, no Israeli was ever invited to participate in the international conferences held by AAPSO (Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization). The total boycott on Israel was a relic of attitudes prevailing in the 1950s, when the organization was founded.

The situation was amended last November, when it was decided that AAPSO would accept "Israeli

pacifists and progressive movements". Ahmed Hamroush, President of the Egyptian branch (and veteran leader of the 1952 revolution) proposed in a preparatory meeting, at AAPSO's Cairo headquarters, to invite the ICIPP – with whose members he had been in contact already long before there was an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. Hamroush's proposal, which was seconded by the Palestinian and the Greek representatives, was accepted unanimously. That is how Kibbutznik Yossi Amitay came to attend the Conference on Solidarity and Cooperation in the Mediterranean held in Athens on February 1992.

Yossi Amitay, who is also an Orientalist, made his speech in Arabic:

The Palestinian people is there, and it is there to stay. By the same token, the Israeli people is there, and it is there to stay. Both peoples cannot be wiped off the map. Both peoples are entitled to be free in their respective national states, which are, in fact, two parts of one shared homeland, dear and beloved and meaningful to each and both.

Amitay met at the conference many old friends, especially among the Palestinian delegates (headed by Labib Terzi, former PLO observer to the U.N.). He made new friends with some of the Syrians and Lebanese. With them there was a lot to talk about. It was interesting and meaningful to hear what the Madrid-Washington talks look like from our neighbors point of view, and an eye-opener to hear from people who have been struggling for many years to reach reconciliation between Christian Lebanese, Muslim Lebanese and Palestinians.

The explosive situation in the Balkans also got much attention – in particular the Macedonian Question, which was a major concern for Greek public opinion at the time of the conference.

The Athens conference also gave an opportunity to compare the activities of our Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace with those of the Turkish Society for Turkish-Greek Friendship.

Surrealism in Jerusalem

On January 21, the following was published in the Jerusalem Post:

Slogans attacking 78-year old Ya'akov Arnon for meeting with PLO leader Yasser Arafat were found scrawled on his apartment door yesterday morning, just hours before he received a prestigious "Distinguished Citizen of Jerusalem" award. (...) Arnon, a former Treasury director-general, met with Arafat twice in the mid-1980s [because he believed it to be] "the only way to achieve peace." (See TOI-50,p.2).

Ya'akov Arnon's wife Lous, herself an active ICIPP member, gave us the following report of what happened:

In the middle of the night, police arrived to warn us about hostile actions by the Kach movement. The nameplate on the door of our flat had been covered with a big black X, while on the sides of the staircase was scrawled in neat black Hebrew characters: *Arnon distinguished by Arafat! and Arnon – Traitor!* with the signature: *Kach*. The followers of the late Rabbi Meir

Kahane had apparently themselves informed the police.

After a few more hours, two municipality officials appeared, religious ones with on their heads yamulkas, together with an Arab who was wearing a red Kefiya – in the way Arafat wears it. Under the directions of the two officials, the Arab started whitewashing the offending inscriptions, with a big brush.

I started talking to him in Arabic and told him that my husband had met several times with Arafat, and is active for peace. The two officials did not like it. They told me in an angry voice that they had come to *do the job and not to talk politics.*

A few hours later we were listening to the praising words of Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, sitting in a solemn ceremony also attended by Supreme Court President Shamgar.

A surrealistic sequence of events.

Dialogue under bomb threat

In March, Meretz KM Dedi Zucker and PLO London representative Afif Safieh shared a platform at two public meetings in London and Glasgow. To comply with the letter of Israeli law, the two speakers did not engage in direct dialogue but presented their positions and then answered questions.

An audience of about 250 people, including many Palestinians, attended the meeting at the Liberal Synagogue in London. It was organised by the International Center for Peace in the Middle East, and took place in spite of a bomb threat.

Over one hundred people participated at the second meeting, held a few days later under the auspices of the Glasgow Zionist Organization.

The generally peaceful atmosphere of the meetings - with only occasional outbursts from among the audience - exemplified the underlying themes of the events: How to overcome fear and distrust through dialogue. The Jewish press in the United Kingdom did not ignore the events. However, in their reports they overemphasized the emotional "contributions" from the floor - based on fear, distrust and ignorance.

The speakers established common ground on a fairly broad spectrum of issues. Most importantly, they concurred in the demand for cessation of all activities which would put the peace process in jeopardy. In particular, Dedi Zucker demanded the immediate halt of new settlements and of all terrorist activities as a precondition for a successful continuation of the peace process. Safieh agreed to this precondition. The two also agreed on the need to fight against extremism and rejectionism, in Israel as well as among Palestinians. They also stressed the importance of a more purposeful, interventionist role by the United States, which they regarded as necessary if the peace process was to achieve its final goal. Agreement in general terms was also expressed on the status of Jerusalem. Both speakers advocated making Jerusalem an open, undivided city.

The atmosphere at the end of the evening reflected the attempts by both speakers at breaking the barrier

of silence and preparing the ground for dialogue: Only dialogue can help to break the vicious circle of hatred and distrust which are born of ignorance and fear. Only dialogue starts a process of building mutual trust and thus makes peace conceivable. As Dedi Zucker said in London: *We haven't been so close since 1948.*

A report of the two public meetings was made available by Max Alter, chief editor of JADE News, (Jewish-Arab Dialogue in Europe), 43 Ponsoby Place, London, SW1P 4PS, U.K. phone: (0)71.233.5162; fax: (0)71.233.5161.

■ On March 18, not only the Israeli but also the world media gave extensive reports of a tragedy in Jaffa, where a sword-yielding Gazan rampaged through the streets, killing a 19-year old girl and the (Arab) man who tried to save her life. He also wounded eleven highschool pupils, before being himself killed by a policeman. (Later investigation revealed that he was motivated by the wish to revenge the death of his father.)

The attacked pupils were from the Miterani School at Holon, a town south of Tel-Aviv, who had come to Jaffa in order to celebrate the Purim holiday.

A week later, the Miterani School was visited by Arab pupils and teachers from Kafr Qasem Village, who expressed their support. Their meeting with the Miterani pupils was held in a good atmosphere. The Miterani School principal told the local monthly magazine: "We are maintaining contact with the Kafr Qasem school for over ten years, with mutual visits and common activities. It seems we have built up a relationship strong enough to survive this traumatic event (*Holon*, April 1992).

The freeing of Abie Nathan

On February 14, The Abie Nathan Lobby, was officially launched by some 150 activists gathered at Tel-Aviv's Tzavta hall. Fifteen Knesset Members - including Labour KMs - attended or sent messages of support. So did also the mayors of Herzlia, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, the first two being members of the ruling Likud Party. The mood of the meeting was captured by Hadash (Communist) KM Hashem Mahameed, who stated: *Sure, Abie Nathan broke the law by meeting Arafat. But what law is that! A law designed to block the road to peace!*

Soon afterwards, Nathan's supporters initiated contacts with President Haim Herzog. Previously, the President made a pardon for Abie Nathan conditional upon Nathan's public contrition. Now, however, the President asked only that Nathan undertake not to break the law again. Nathan was reluctant to take that step either; but his supporters, on their visits to his prison, prevailed upon him to accept the presidential terms and undertake from now on, to use legal means only in opposing the "Anti-peace law". Thereupon, the President signed a



decree commuting the year which Nathan still had to serve to suspended imprisonment.

At noon on March 30, Abie Nathan went out of the Ma'asiyahu Prison and was met at the gate by a group of friends who brought a bottle of champagne, and by a large crowd of journalists. In a press conference improvised on the spot, Nathan told what had brought him to his decision. The most important consideration was that the government itself was now engaged in some sort of negotiations with the PLO.

Nathan also mentioned that he wanted to be free in order to be involved in the elections campaign, and to lend his support to all parties which advocate abolition of the law which had brought him into prison. In the three months until the elections he would refrain from meeting the PLO illegally: *I have good hopes that, soon after the elections, the holding of a peaceful dialogue with the Palestinian leadership will cease to be a crime.*

Nathan also intends to work for a pardon to one of his cell-mates, sentenced for murder, who has been in prison for 13 years already.

David Ish-Shalom
- prisoner of peace -

In the 1980s, bypassers on the streets of Jerusalem often encountered the spectacle of a man hauling a handcart piled with books, bearing the inscription "The Peace Cart" and the picture of a nuclear mushroom cloud. Anybody who accosted him received a lecture on the nuclear peril facing Israel and the Middle East; many were convinced to buy a copy of the man's book, containing a detailed plan for regional nuclear disarmament.

Born David *de Buton* in 1949, he had in his teens changed his family name to *Ish-Shalom* (Man of Peace). It was David Ish-Shalom who conceived the idea of getting Likud members to meet with prominent pro-PLO West Bank Palestinians, such as Feisal Hussein. The publication of these meetings on September 1987 caused Moshe Amirav, the main Israeli interlocutor, to be expelled from the Likud (see TOI 28-29, p.5). But it was from that time that a difference between "moderates" and "hardliners" started to be discernable in the hitherto monolithic Likud.

After the Knesset passed the law forbidding Israelis to meet with the PLO, David Ish-Shalom took a prominent part in dialogue meetings held in defiance of that law.

Later, he shifted his attention in a different direction: since 1990, he headed an association dedicated to establishing the first "Ecological Village" in Israel, with housing planned to be "environment-friendly" (and also cheaper). The government offered to give the association free land and many subsidies - provided the village was erected in the West Bank. After Ish-Shalom and his

associates turned this offer down, government officials obstructed their plans in every possible way.

Just as numerous efforts at last procured land west of Jerusalem, within the *Green Line*, the cumbersome machinery of Justice caught up with Ish-Shalom. He was put on trial for numerous breaches of the "Anti-terrorist Law": his participation in the Budapest meeting with senior PLO official Mahmud Abbas (TOI-28, p.3.), in June 1987; meetings with PLO officials in Cyprus, as part of the preparations for the *Ship of Return* project in February, 1988 (see TOI-31, p.5); and a meeting with Yasser Arafat, at the September 1987 NGO conference in Geneva.

In the magistrate's and district courts Ish-Shalom's lawyer, Adv. Yossi Bard, pursued a daring line of defence: to challenge the very legitimacy of the Israeli government's proclamation that the PLO is "a terrorist organization". Numerous expert witnesses were summoned to bring forward an alternative contention: that the PLO is a semi-state institution, much as the Jewish Agency was in pre-'48 Palestine; and that the great majority of PLO personnel are engaged in politics, administration, health, education and welfare - not in military operations against Israel. In a cross-examination, Adv. Bard succeeded in confusing Yigal Karmon, Prime Minister's Advisor on Terrorism. But the judges nevertheless found Ish-Shalom guilty and sentenced him to seven months' imprisonment.

On April 7, Supreme Court Judge Meir Shamgar denied Ish-Shalom the right to present his case in another appeal. He was even denied a ten-day delay, to put his business affairs in order, and was required to present himself the following day for the commencement of his punishment.

At noon on April 8, a group of Israeli and Palestinian peace activists gathered on the steps of the Jerusalem District Court House, to bid farewell to Ish-Shalom. Prominent among them was Feisal Hussein, as well as Moshe Amirav, who is now a member of the new Meretz peace alliance. Press photographers took photos of Hussein embracing Ish-Shalom. As he stepped into the waiting police car, Ish-Shalom told his friends: *Don't worry about me. I did everything out of my belief in God, the God of Peace. I am sure that God will take care of me wherever I go and whatever happens to me.*

An Ish-Shalom Solidarity Committee has been formed, to agitate for a presidential pardon to David Ish-Shalom, according to the Abie Nathan precedent. The readers of *The Other Israel* are requested to support David Ish-Shalom's struggle by writing letters, and sending money to help finance Ish-Shalom's legal struggle.

Letters to: President Haim Herzog, Presidential Mansion, 3 Hanassi St., Jerusalem 92188;
fax: 972.2.610037.

Letters of solidarity to: David Ish-Shalom, c/o POB 2542, Holon 58125, Israel. (N.B.: Checks should be made payable to Beate Zilversmidt/D.I.-S.)