

The Other Israel

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for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

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THE EXPLOSION

On November 6, 1987, a 17-year old Palestinian schoolgirl was shot to death at Dir-el-Balah, in the Gaza Strip. The suspect arrested by the police was Shimon Yifrach, an Israeli settler. He did not, however, stay long behind bars; after senior government officials visited him in prison and shook his hand, he was granted bail - a privilege denied to Palestinians accused of far lesser crimes.

On December 6 an Israeli civilian, a salesman for a plastics factory, was stabbed to death in the middle of Gaza. On the following day, an Israeli heavy truck run over four inhabitants of the Jabaliyah refugee camp, one of the biggest in the Gaza Strip. It was probably a genuine accident; but the situation had already escalated to the point where all official explanations are distrusted. The inhabitants of Jabaliyah believed that it was not at all an accident, but the settlers' revenge for the death of the salesman. The atmosphere in Jabaliyah was already tense, due to a deportation order issued by the military governor against a respected religious leader who is an inhabitant of the camp. A demonstration started at the Jabaliyah girls' school, and was joined by hundreds of inhabitants; Israeli soldiers arrived, and were stoned by the crowd; they opened fire, and three Palestinians were killed.

This was the final spark setting off the tension which had mounted throughout 1987. Within a day, the violence spread to all parts of the Gaza Strip; another day, and it entered the West bank as well. Israeli politicians and journalists debated whether the events should be termed "disorders", "riots", "civil disobedience" or "rebellion". What may be said is that the inhabitants of

the occupied territories daily confront the Israeli army with stones, Molotov cocktails, burning tyres or just bare hands. According to official figures, up to the time of writing 35 Palestinians lost their lives in these clashes.* The number of wounded is in the hundreds.

Demonstrations and riots there have been often before; but the intensity of these daily confrontations, in which the inhabitants of occupied territories face the army's bullets, is unprecedented. Especially in the Gaza Strip the upsurge reached the proportions of a full-scale war. Several times, the Israeli army lost control of the Strip; again and again, soldiers had to withdraw in face of the Palestinian crowds; passage, not only through the towns and refugee camps, but even in the Gaza Strip's single highway, was frequently denied to the Israeli army. In fact, the army has to practically reconquer the Gaza Strip. As army chief-of-staff Dan Shomron explicitly admitted, stronger forces were required than those used in 1967, when the Gaza Strip was conquered from the Egyptian army; and even these forces are finding the task difficult.

The Palestinians confronted not only the Israeli army, but the Israeli economy as well. A general strike was declared. Nearly all workers from the Gaza Strip, and many from the West Bank, absented themselves from workplaces in Israel. Their absence was noticeable in every place where hard work at low salary is required: on construction sites, in the kitchens of restaurants, in street-cleaning, in garages, in textile factories; highschool pupils were hastily mobilised in order to save the oranges from rotting on the trees.

The strike was particularly felt in

the south of Israel, near Gaza. It was clearly proved that, by turning Palestinian workers into a reservoir of cheap labor, Israeli society has made itself extremely vulnerable.

* * *

On December 22 Defence Minister Rabin, of the Labor Party, determined to "restore order in the territories" and initiated a campaign of arrests. Agents of the Israeli security services spent the whole night rounding up anybody considered an actual or a potential "troublemaker". Hundreds of Palestinians were arrested; lists of candidates for deportation were drawn up.

By Christmas Eve, the occupied territories seemed "pacified". In Bethlehem, though there were more soldiers than pilgrims and more guns than Christmas trees, the celebration of the Midnight Mass at the Church of the Nativity did pass without a hitch. Many Bethlehem youths spent the cold and rainy Christmas night far to the south, in overcrowded tents at the hastily-constructed Dahariyah Detention Camp.

In the following week, the military courts in the occupied territories instituted a procedure called "quick justice". Quick it was: too quick for lawyers to be able to offer their clients any real defence. The lawyers could only refuse to legitimize the procedure with their presence. Hundreds of youths were sentenced to prison terms in trials lasting, on the average, five to ten minutes. Nine detainees, designated "arch-inciters", were singled out for deportation without trial.

In the midst of this process, the "pacification" came to an abrupt end

on January 3, 1988, having lasted a bare week. This time, the uproar started on the West Bank. At Al-Ram village, north of Jerusalem, a soldier chased stone-throwing boys, broke into a house and shot to death a young woman who was hanging out the laundry. Despite urgent attempts to "contain" the trouble, the riots immediately spread to various parts of the West Bank, including places untouched by the previous wave; shortly the Gaza Strip, too, burst out in renewed defiance of the occupation. On January 7, Defence Minister Rabin visited a refugee camp at Khan-Yuneis; his convoy had to steer a roundabout way, since the main road was blocked by stones and burning tyres.

The government reacted by imposing weeks-long tight curfews on the refugee camps and other "trouble spots". These curfews certainly caused great hardships for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. They also prevented Palestinian workers from going to work in Israel. The resulting damage to the Israeli economy was added to that caused by the Palestinians' own general strike.

What the curfews did not achieve was to put out the fires of rebellion. At the time of writing, the Palestinian upsurge in the occupied territories continues; government speakers have more or less ceased their optimist predictions about "the calm" returning soon; the death toll is mounting every day.

The agony of the occupied territories aroused many protests from within the Israeli society. Demonstrations are held; reserve soldiers face imprisonment for their refusal to participate in the carnage; within the Labor Party doves and hawks face each other in bitter dispute; in the Likud, the dissident Moshe Amirav openly challenged Ariel Sharon's demagoguery and provocations; the Arab citizens of Israel held a one-day general solidarity strike which received an unprecedented amount of support from Jewish-Israeli political groupings.

The enemies of peace, too, have been increasingly active, their anti-

Arab incitement becoming more and more bloodthirsty. Knesset Member (!) Benny Shalita, of the "Liberal" party, stated: "We should kill fifty Arabs on one day".

In this shifting, polarized Israel, the hour of decision draws near. General elections are scheduled for November of this year, many voices demanding to put the date forward. It is clear that the campaign will be dominated by the crisis in the occupied territories. The peace movement will be put to a crucial test.

The Editor.

**Knesset Member Muhammad Miari read, on the Knesset floor, a list of Palestinians killed, which included several names whose death was not admitted by the army.*

The true inciter

The following is a resolution of the ICIPP executive, adopted on December 16 and published in Ha'aretz on December 20, 1987

The blood of young Palestinians, which is daily shed in the occupied territories, stains the hands of all ministers in the Israeli government – of Yitzchak Rabin and of Yitzchak Shamir, of Shimon Peres and of Ariel Sharon. This government of so-called "National Unity" is united in denying to the Palestinian people the right to live in their own independent, sovereign state.

The occupation regime in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank is the true inciter. The occupation is the cause of the rebellion and uprising. Deportations, "administrative detentions", demolition of houses, confiscation of land for settlements, daily humiliation of Palestinians at road-blocks – that is the incitement which is setting the occupied territories on fire.

We call upon the Israeli public to speak out loudly and let its protest be heard. We demand a comprehensive and independent investigation of the conduct of the Israeli army and "border guard" forces in the occupied territories; of all the cases of shooting, wounding and killing, of

all instances of humiliation and mistreatment.

We say: there is only one way to achieve a political solution and put an end to the bloodshed, on both sides: negotiations between the government of Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, leading to the creation of an independent Palestinian state, side-by-side with the state of Israel.

A surprise visitor

At the beginning of January, "Gush Emmunim" organised a group of Israelis whose relatives were killed in Palestinian attacks, and sent them to the United States.

They stated their intention to prove to the world that "not only Palestinian are victims, but Israelis also". The group got little attention as they sat for a week in the rain and the snow, outside the U.N. building in New York. As one of them recounted, only one person came to talk with them. A member of the PLO delegation to the U.N.

Press freedom under attack

The Israeli government is increasingly concerned with journalistic reportage of its repressive actions in the occupied territories. As soon as "disorders" start, the surrounding area is declared "a closed military area", to prevent journalists from arriving at the spot. Some journalists – from both Israeli and foreign papers – were beaten up or arrested when they attempted to do their work and enter these closed areas.

The Palestinian press of East Jerusalem, which is at all times subject to heavy censorship, faces added hardships: several journalists were detained, accused of "membership in terrorist organizations". Before being released they were told that a press conference which they planned to hold constitutes an "illegal gathering", and that they would be prosecuted should they insist on holding it. (In the event, the arrest already gave them more publicity than a press conference could have done.)

In Israel's own borders, too, freedom of the press is threatened.

The next issue of The Other Israel will appear only in April. This delay is not of our choosing, especially not in the present situation. However, so far our finances do not permit us to have more than one – half-time – paid employee, which brings about some limitations.

To enable The Other Israel to continue its task, IT IS VITAL THAT MORE READERS MAKE SUBSCRIPTIONS !

And...why not also make somebody else – whom you would like to read it – a subscriber?

The "Emergency Regulations" which Israel inherited from British colonialism and which were never abolished, enable the Interior Ministry to close down newspapers. On January 19, this ministry declared its intention to stop the publication of "Derech Hanitzotz" ("Spark") magazine. The Interior Ministry claimed that "the newspaper is connected with a terrorist organization", but produced no evidence - evidence is not required by the Emergency Regulations. It seems that the real motive is the paper's coverage of events in the occupied territories, often revealing facts not available elsewhere. This enabled the paper to get more readers, and the editors were just about to transform it from a bi-weekly into a weekly.

The Interior Ministry did not yet give its final decision on "Derech Hanitzotz". The outcome could be influenced by your intervention.

Letters of protest should be sent to:
Eli Swissa, Jerusalem District Commissioner, Interior Ministry Offices, 1 Shlomtzion Hamalka St., Jerusalem 94146.

Solidarity letters to:
Derech Hanitzotz,
P.O.Box 1575, Jerusalem.

Jerusalem on fire

With the growing tension in the occupied territories Ariel Sharon, leader of the Likud hardliners, saw a chance to enhance his status inside the Likud and among nationalist fanatics in general.

Sharon had long maintained contacts with the settlers who are gradually "Judaising" the Muslim quarter of Old Jerusalem; this cooperation was openly manifested during the anti-Arab pogroms of November 1986. Now, his settler friends have acquired for Sharon a large apartment in the very center of the Muslim quarter. By some means or another, the former Arab tenants were induced to sign legally-binding bills of sale.

Hordes of security men descended upon the house; (Arab) workers labored day and night to make it fitting for its new inhabitant; specially-imported bullet-proof glass was installed in the windows.

The great expense involved in maintaining guard over Sharon's new palatial residence became a subject of controversy; it was revealed that as many policemen are required to guard Sharon as are used to police an average middle-sized Israeli town. Sharon had a ready answer: "The more policemen are put into the Old City, the safer and more secure it would be for Jews to walk its streets."

While tensions mounted in the Gaza Strip and spilled over into the West Bank, Sharon set the date for his gala night - December 15, 1987, the first day of the Chanuka holiday. Sharon invited his 200 guests to light with him the traditional candles. The guest list read like who's who of the Israeli right.

Ido Disenchik, editor-in-chief of the respectable Ma'ariv, who was himself one of Sharon's guests, wrote the following:

"The Old City's Damascus Gate and the big parking lot adjoining it looked like a barracks (...) from every niche and behind every corner a gun barrel stuck out; on each roof there were armed guards; from the houses, frightened eyes looked furtively out. It gave a feeling of living in a police state, which is putting a rebellious neighborhood under siege. This is not the way for Jews and Arabs to live together." (Ma'ariv, 21/12/87).

Soon after his guests departed, Ariel Sharon departed too. He went to spend the night in the luxurious suite maintained for him, by the treasury of the State of Israel, at the "Plaza" hotel in West Jerusalem. In the following weeks, he did not come again to visit his home in the Muslim quarter, except for one cursory inspection lasting a few minutes.

The guards remained. All of Sharon's Arab "neighbors" are now required to undergo thorough searches every time they enter or leave their homes. Moreover, they have been forbidden to receive guests.

On December 19, four days after Sharon's Chanuka party, East Jerusalem burst out into riots. Their ferocity was unprecedented in the East City's twenty years of forcible incorporation into Israel. Stone-throwing crowds simultaneously appeared in all Arab neighborhoods. Streets were blocked by burning tyres; garbage containers, each weighting several tons, were moved by muscle power to the middle of the main road. Israeli

institutions implanted in the Arab city were attacked; Hebrew signs were pulled down and smashed; the branches of Israeli Banks were ransacked and destroyed.

In a television interview David Kraus, the chief of the Israeli police, admitted: "We were taken by surprise. Who could have imagined that something like this would happen in Jerusalem?"

Revival of Peace Now

On the day of Sharon's explosive party, a sight was seen outside the Old City's Damascus Gate which has become exceedingly rare in recent years: the banners of the "Peace Now" movement. The police denied Peace Now permission to demonstrate inside the Old City. The demonstrators - some of whom were Palestinians - were herded into a small, fenced in enclosure. However, all of Sharon's guests had to pass in front of the demonstrators, who greeted them with boos and hisses.

This re-appearance of Peace Now was unexpected; barely a month before, an article in Mapam's newspaper lamented "the untimely demise of Peace Now". In fact, Peace Now had faced a deep crisis since its protest demonstration after the Sabra and Shatila massacres, in which 400,000 participated. This record number could only be achieved through cooperation with the Labor Party, and the use of this party's considerable organizational and financial resources. Ever since, the Labor Party had held a de-facto veto power over Peace Now's activities (see issue no 1).

Since 1984, when Labor entered the government coalition, Peace Now was almost totally paralysed; it could only act when this served the Labor Party's interests. Thus, when Shimon Peres made his effort to promote an International Peace Conference, Peace Now was able to hold a demonstration on the same issue; but once Peres shelved his initiative, Peace Now fell silent again.

The events of December 1987 jolted the Peace Now leadership out of its slumber. In an urgent meeting held in Jerusalem, several members stated: "We must speak up now, or declare ourselves disbanded in disgrace."

Demonstrating against Sharon's provocation presented no political problem for Peace Now. But a few days later, on December 19, the rally held in Tel-Aviv directly challenged the oppression and killing in the occupied territories – acts for which Labor's Defence Minister Rabin holds responsibility. Therefore, this Peace Now rally, unlike previous ones, did not have the Labor Party's backing; on the contrary, the Labor bureaucracy actively worked against it, intimidating Labor doves who wanted to participate. As a result, the number of participants in this, the first time Peace Now challenged the combined power of the two big parties, was estimated in thousands, not hundreds of thousands.

In a related development, there was some change in Peace Now's traditional stand-offish attitude towards other peace organizations. By a tacit understanding, it was agreed that a march held by "Down with the Occupation" would merge into the Peace Now rally. The march, whose participants shouted militant and defiant slogans, was harassed by the police as it wound its ways along the streets of Tel-Aviv. It was clear that the policemen did not at all like the large participation of Arabs in the march; several demonstrators, mostly Arabs, were taken off under flimsy excuses, to spend the night in detention.*

A week later, Peace Now was itself to taste the police's iron fist, during a torchlight procession it held in Jerusalem. The participants were arbitrarily forbidden to approach the Prime Minister's residence; as they nevertheless tried to do so, tear gas canisters were fired at them.

The most significant change in Peace Now's position was the presence – for the first time since the movement's foundation – of Palestinian speakers on its rostrum. One speaker was Dr. Zakaria al-Aga of Gaza, whom the military government has dismissed from his job. The next speaker was a Palestinian holding Israeli citizenship, the mayor of Jat. In his speech at the Peace Now rally, he made one of the first public announcements of the decision by the Arab Mayors' Committee to call a general strike of all Arabs in Israel. (See also page 12)

* All but one were released by the police on the following morning. The police intended to keep one Arab in detention for forty-eight hours, but advocate Tamar Peleg of The Civil

Rights Association succeeded in getting the Tel-Aviv District Court to release him, thereby creating an important legal precedent.

Fire touches Jaffa

When the Arab mayors and Knesset Members, united in the "Committee of Arab Mayors", decided upon a general strike, it was made clear that this was to be a quiet and orderly affair, without disturbances or demonstrations. For half of the day-long general strike, the organisers succeeded in keeping the Arab population calm. But at noon, when the church bells tolled and from the minarets Muslim prayers for the dead were called, something broke. Nearly everybody, in the Arab towns and villages, has relatives in the occupied territories, and restraint could no longer be kept. Almost simultaneously, in various parts of the country, Arab crowds burst into violence.

It was not a surprise that crowds clashed with the police in Nazareth or that thousands poured onto the main highway at Umm-el-Fahm, blocking the road for several hours. The community of Umm-el-Fahm has a tradition of being militant, and Nazareth has long been considered the "Arab capital of Israel". What caught many Israelis unprepared were the outbursts at Lydda and Jaffa – cities whose Arab population was mainly uprooted in 1948, leaving behind broken remnants encircled in what became Jewish towns. In particular the Jaffa demonstrations caused a shock. Jewish inhabitants of metropolitan Tel-Aviv hardly realise that, among the new and imposing buildings, an Arab community still exists; that this community is denied municipal services and lives in worsening slum conditions. For the first time in forty years, the members of this forgotten community really stood up, asserting their identity as Arabs, as Palestinians.

The Israeli public felt the conflict coming close to home. Certain politicians were quick to capitalise upon this fear and use it for anti-Arab incitement. KM Haim Kaufmann of the Likud proposed to outlaw the Arab Mayors' Committee, and place all of Israel's Arab citizens under martial law – as they were between 1949 and 1966.

Nevertheless, the support in Israel for the Arab strike was substantial. Not only the Progressive List and the Communists, but also Mapam and Ratz wholly supported the strike – though the last two did condemn the violent outbreak. The Labor-controlled Histadrut trade union made a verbal promise to protect Arab workers who may be victimised for participating in the strike. Hebrew newspaper editorials gave at least lip-service to "the feelings of the Arabs and their concern for their relatives in the territories".

All in all, it was quite a different reaction from the one after "Land Day" in 1976. It reflected the fact that the Arabs in Israel have become a strong, well-organised community, capable of defending its interests and constituting a substantial block of voters, whose electoral support no party could any longer take for granted.

The Labor-Likud government decided, for the moment at least, to take no step against the Arab Mayors' Committee, which enjoys the support of practically all Arab citizens of Israel. The government promised that, in its new budget, there will be more funds for Arab housing and education. At the same time, hundreds of Arabs were arrested on charge of participating in the riots. It seems that there is an attempt to isolate and break the Arab radical groups, such as Ibna-el-Balad (Sons of the Village). Many of its members were arrested, and two of its leaders placed under "Administrative Detention" without trial – a measure whose use in recent years was restricted to the occupied territories. Among the detainees there were also supporters of the Communist Party and the Progressive List for Peace (PLP).

Anti-Arab prejudices and frustrations surfaced two days after the strike, at the Knesset debate on December 23. Dozens of KMs attacked and threatened the Arab KMs; threats of deportations for the entire Arab population were voiced. The target of the racist storm were two KMs: Muhammed Miari of the PLP and Tufiq Tubi of the Communist Party. Speaker Shlomo Hillel used a trifling excuse to expel KM Miari from the session and prevent him from speaking; on the same day Haim Hanegbi, the PLP Parliamentary Secretary, was suspended for having distributed a communique entitled "Defence Minister Rabin is drunk", which was considered insulting language (see

box). Within a few days, Hanegbi's suspension was cancelled. But Roni Milo, Prime Minister Shamir's deputy, openly stated that an attempt will be made to prevent the PLP from running in the general elections, due later this year.

Was Rabin drunk?

(Interview with Haim Hanegbi in Hadashot, December 24, 1987)

- Is this the way to speak about the Defence Minister?

- The communique was about Rabin being 'drunk with power'; but any Knesset regular will tell you that this headline is also literally true, that Rabin is really a drunk. Everybody in Israel saw him on television, threatening the Arabs in Israel with a repetition of the 1948 tragedy, with his face red and his eyes bloodshot. Today, in the Knesset, he denied ever having said such a thing!

- Still, it is usual not to mention in public such matters as whether a certain person is drinking or picking his nose.

- It is also usual not to shoot dead unarmed demonstrators.

- Did you expect to be suspended from the Knesset for distributing this communique?

- No, since there was no 'disgrace of the Knesset'. What happened was simply the Iron Fist policy reaching into the Knesset.

- By the way, I noticed that the communique did not contain a single word of condemnation of this week's disorders in Umm-el-Fahm, Jaffa and Lydda.

- We never said, and never will say, a single word of condemnation about Palestinian resistance which manifests itself in stone-throwing. Nobody condemned David for throwing a stone at Goliath!

Chronicle of Protests

The following is a list of solidarity and protest actions undertaken by Israeli peace activists since the uprising in the occupied territories started on December 9.

11/12 - Picket of the Defence Ministry, started spontaneously after news came of the killing of three Palestinians at Balata refugee camp. Picketers illegally ordered off by police.

13/12 - Defence Ministry picketed by "Down with the Occupation".

14/12 - Student demonstrations at Jerusalem, Haifa and Be'er Sheva universities. Haifa demonstration dispersed by police. In the evening, students picketing Prime Minister Shamir's residence are dispersed by tear gas.

15/12 - Peace Now demonstration at Damascus Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem, to protest Ariel Sharon's provocation (see article). One-man demonstration by Likud Dissident Moshe Amirav, at the entrance to Sharon's "new house".

16/12 - Campus demonstration at Tel-Aviv University and confrontation with right-wing students.

16/12 - In a demonstration in downtown Haifa, police detains two demonstrators, though the demonstration was orderly and with a police permit.

17/12 - Members of the Labor Party Council publish a statement condemning the conduct of Defence Minister Rabin, their fellow Laborite.

17/12 - Twenty peace activists visit Balata refugee camp and participate in a demonstration of inhabitants.

19/12 - Two large demonstrations in Tel-Aviv, by "Down with the Occupation" and "Peace Now" (see article on p.3).

23-24/12 - Pickets of the Defence Ministry receive much media attention, because of the participation by well-known writers and because picketers continue to stand in pouring rain.

24/12 - A "peace caravan", organized by Oriental Jewish peace groups, is stopped by an army roadblock and not allowed to proceed to Jalazun refugee camp.

25/12 - 54 Academics publish a petition, condemning government policies in the occupied territories.

25/12 - "Down with the Occupation" demonstration at the border between East and West Jerusalem, just outside the Old City walls.

26/12 - Peace Now rally and torchlight procession in Jerusalem, dispersed by tear gas at the Prime Minister's residence (see article).

27/12 - Picket at the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem and a women's picket at the Defence Ministry in Tel-Aviv.

29/12 - A student demonstration at the Jerusalem University; confrontation with right-wing students. At the Student Union Council (majority held by the Labor Party) resolutions are adopted condemning human rights violations in the occupied territories.

31/12 - In Haifa, a demonstration in

front of the courthouse, in which the Administrative Detention of two Arabs is confirmed. Confrontation with racist counter-demonstrators, who enjoy the sympathy of the police.

31/12 - 160 Reserve soldiers declare, in a press conference, their refusal to serve in the occupied territories (see article p.6).

31/12 - 36 Professors sign a petition against deportations of Palestinians from the occupied territories.

2/1/88 - A group of 80 Israeli women, half of them Jewish, half Arab, set out in taxis to visit Far'ah refugee camp; 20 are stopped at an army road block and ordered back. The rest manage to get through and are warmly received by camp inhabitants.

5/1 - Ofer Kasif imprisoned for refusing military service in Gaza (see article p.6)

6/1 - The Acre Municipal Council debates on the firing of 10 Arab workers who had participated in the general strike. The Likud members, suddenly start singing "Hatikva", the Israeli national anthem, "in order to test the loyalty of the Communist Arab councillors"; but the Arabs, together with councillors from Mapam and the Labor Party, remain defiantly seated.

6/1 - A student demonstration takes place in Tel-Aviv University.

6/1 - Well-known singer Yardena Arazi declares her intention to perform songs of famous Arab singers, translated into Hebrew. "I cannot remain silent to what is happening in the territories. I regard this as extending my hand in peace."

8/1 - "Down with the Occupation" holds a public meeting in Tel-Aviv and a demonstration at Prime Minister Shamir's residence in Jerusalem. The demonstrators carry a 3-meters high placard, on which a drawing shows Shamir shaking hands with Yasser Arafat, and the words: "Shamir, this is the only way to achieve peace!"

8/1 - Twenty well-known Israeli authors visit Gaza and publish a statement condemning the occupation and advocating negotiations with the PLO.

9/1 - In the Upper Galilee, kibbutz members and Beduins demonstrate together at a central crossroads.

10/1 - Conscript Charles Lanzman imprisoned for refusal to participate in dispersing demonstrators in East Jerusalem.

12/1 - In Kiryat Bialik, a suburb of Haifa, anti-racist demonstrators hold a vigil against a local religious

official, who had declared a campaign against "crime, prostitution and mixed marriages between Jews and Arabs".

14/1 and 15/1 - Vigils by "Down with the Occupation" in the center of Tel-Aviv.

16/1 - Yesh Gvul demonstration at the border of the Gaza Strip, calling for the release of reserve soldier Ofer Kasim (see article on this page).
17/1 - Highschool students and their supporters picket the Defence Ministry, demanding the release of conscript Charles Lanzman. One of the demonstrators is recognized by military police as a serving soldier and is arrested.

17/1 - Peace Now demonstrators follow Prime Minister Shamir on his way from his residence to his office.
18/1 - A demonstration of Arab students at Haifa university.

18/1 until 21/1 - Ratz members daily picket the Defence Ministry.
19/1 - Outside the Ramleh Court, where a session of the Anti-Peace Trial takes place, supporters of the defendants hold a picket.

19/1 - A caravan of three trucks, carrying food collected among Jews and Arabs in Israel, sets out for the Gazan refugee camps under curfew. It is stopped at the entrance to the Gaza Strip. The caravan's organisers hold a sit-in strike and clash with army and police. Late at night, Palestinians arrive from the refugee camps and succeed in smuggling the food inside. (On the following days, large quantities of food continue to be collected and sent to Gaza by many groups and organizations. In the Arab towns and villages, the campaign gets the support of the whole population.)

20/1 - All Arab highschool students in Israel strike for an hour, in solidarity with the inhabitants of the occupied territories.

21/1 - Vigil by "Down with the Occupation" in Tel-Aviv. The demonstrators are attacked by hooligans, who try to provoke a riot which would make the police disperse the demonstration. The demonstrators, with the support of sympathetic bypassers, foil this attempt.

22/1 - Dozens of reserve officers of the Israeli army picket Defence Minister Rabin's home, to protest the new policy of ordering soldiers to beat Palestinians with clubs and break their arms and legs.

23/1 - Giant demonstrations at Tel-Aviv and Nazareth (see article on page 12).

23/1 - A group of poets and

professors, who intended to visit refugee camps in the Gaza Strip, is blocked by the army.

24/1 - PLP members from Nazareth and Jerusalem picket the Prime Minister's office during the cabinet meeting.

A call to Socialist Parties

The Israeli Labor Party highly values its membership in the Socialist International and the network of contacts which it has built up over the years with member parties. Therefore, pressure exerted by these parties has a good chance of influencing the policies of the Labor Party and thus of effecting the behavior of Labor ministers in the Israeli government.

Copies of the following letter were sent to member parties of the Socialist International. Readers of The Other Israel are requested to emphasise its importance to members, institutions or newspapers of the Socialist or Social Democratic Party in their country.

Jerusalem, January 3, 1988

To the Secretariat and members of The Socialist International

Dear Friends, I find it necessary to write to you urgently, concerning the plans of Defence Minister Yitzchak Rabin to carry out the deportation of Palestinians from the occupied territories.

Mr Rabin seems fond of this method of deporting Palestinians without any form of trial. During Menachem Begin's term in office, the use of deportations was stopped; but Rabin reintroduced it in 1985. Recently he declared himself, on the Knesset floor, to be "proud" that he had deported more Palestinians in three years than the Likud did in seven.

On this very day the army authorities, under Rabin's guidance, have issued deportation orders against nine more Palestinians.

I urge you to exert any influence you may have upon Rabin, who - as a leader of the Israeli Labor Party - is your fellow member of the Socialist International. He should be stopped from carrying out this plan, which is inhuman, which is contrary to the Geneva Convention of 1949 (which Israel signed) and which will sharpen the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Should these deportations take place, still more hatred and bloodshed might follow. I hope that you will make all possible efforts to help prevent this from happening.

Yours

Mattityahu Peled

Member of the Knesset

The Following is translated from the Knesset records. The exchange took place during the Knesset debate on December 8, 1987.

KM Yehoshua Matza (*Likud*): "How many (Palestinians) did you deport in the last year?"

Defence Minister Y.Rabin (*Labor Party*): "In three years, I have deported three times as many as you (the Likud) have deported in seven years."

KM Charlie Biton (*Democratic Front for Peace and Equality*): "Bravo, bravo! Can you really be proud of that?"

Defence Minister Y.Rabin: "Yes, I am proud of that."

KM Yehoshua Matza (*Likud*): "If this is true, then I congratulate you."
Defence Minister Y.Rabin (*Labor Party*): "It is true. Check the figures and you will see."

Military service questioned

On December 31, 1987, the "Yesh Gvul" ("There is a Limit") movement presented the following petition:

"The Palestinian people is in revolt against Israeli occupation. Over twenty years of occupation and repression have not halted the Palestinian struggle for national liberation. The uprising in the occupied territories and its brutal suppression by the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) graphically illustrate the terrible price of occupation and the absence of a political solution.

As IDF reservists, we declare that we can no longer bear the burden of shared responsibility for this moral and political deprivation. We hereby proclaim that we shall refuse to take part in suppressing the uprising and insurrection in the occupied territories."

The petition was signed by 160 IDF reserve soldiers and officers, including one major and several captains.

On January 5, the first arrest occurred; Ofer Kasif, a 23-year old reserve paratrooper, was ordered to join his unit at Gaza, refused and was sentenced to 28-days imprisonment. His trial got a great deal of attention in the press; in the following days, dozens of new adherents signed the petition. On December 17, "Yesh Gvul" members held a demonstration at the "green line" dividing Israel from the Gaza Strip, stating: "He was imprisoned for refusing to cross this line. So will we refuse!"

On January 19, the young conscript Charles ("Chad") Lanzman was imprisoned for refusing to disperse Palestinian demonstrators in East Jerusalem. Lanzman, an immigrant from the United States, was among the initiators of The Highschool Students' Letter, whose signatories refuse to participate in acts of oppression (*see previous issue*). Many of them face conscription on February.

* * *

The issue of refusing occupation service has long been an object of debate in the Israeli peace movement. Some groups and parties – in particular "Peace Now" and Mapam – have long maintained that soldiers should obey the democratically-elected government, even when they don't agree with its policies; also, it is claimed that by being present on the spot, in the occupied territories, it is possible to mitigate the worst abuses, and to bring back testimonies of what is going on there. A typical example is lieutenant-colonel (res.) Danny Treinin, who commanded a battalion in the Gaza Strip; upon his release, he spoke at the Peace Now rally on December 26, describing vividly the horrors he had seen and strongly condemning the occupation.

On January 18, 1988, several other officers serving in the Gaza Strip lodged complaints with the army Chief of Staff, about being ordered to cut the water, electricity and telephone lines to areas which were put under curfew for more than a week. They also leaked details about this to the press. However, the continuing violent clashes in the occupied territories are more and more forcing the supporters of this approach to make compromises with their conscience.

At the other pole lies the idea of refusal to render any service to the Israeli army, not only in the occupied territories but anywhere. For many

years the Israeli section of the "War Resisters International" was the sole advocate of this position. Most peace activists rejected the idea, believing that the State of Israel, in order to continue existing, is justified in maintaining an army – even if it is not justified in using this army for the occupation of foreign territory. But recent events are increasingly making peace-seeking Israelis altogether alienated from the army, as well as from other state institutions. Therefore, the idea of total refusal has recently received more serious consideration. The veteran War Resister Toma Shik is advising more highschool students than ever on how to use existing law in order to get exemption on grounds of conscience.

Olek Netzer, of the newly-created "Non-violent Resistance to Annexation" proposes to form a rotating group of 300 reserve soldiers who would refuse to perform any military service – as a means for political pressure.

All these different approaches, though their holders often debate heatedly with each other, have a common denominator: the wish to make either serving in the army or refusing it into a weapon for peace.

The theatre syndrome

Hardly had the controversy around the Acre Theatre Festival (*see previous issue*) died out, when another politico-theatrical affair arose. As part of the celebrations of Israel's forty years of existence, it was decided that each of the Israeli theatres would present a play by an Israeli writer. The theatres were free to make the choice themselves; two of the plays chosen turned out to have a highly political character.

* * *

"One of the Guys" is the theatrical debut of Benny Barabash, who served as a regular officer in the Israeli army and reached the rank of lieutenant-colonel. After being written in 1983, it was presented to the "Habimah" theatre, where it gathered dust for years. Only now was it produced by the smaller "Beit Lesin".

The play's setting is a unit of the Israeli Army stationed in the occupied territories. The hero is an invalidated combat soldier who is

assigned – in his new function as a military police investigator – to find the true circumstances of a Palestinian prisoner's death. He discovers that the prisoner was murdered by soldiers who are his own former comrades, and that the murder was committed to avenge the death of a soldier who was the investigator's personal friend. When he does not give in to the emotional pressure of his comrades, the investigator is himself murdered.

* * *

The Haifa Municipal Theatre chose a new play by Yehoshua Sobol. The theatre and the playwright are both veterans of past controversies; several previous plays by Sobol, such as "A Palestinian Woman", "A Jewish Soul" and "Ghetto" have already caused public storms. Sobol's new play proved a worthy successor.

"The Jerusalem Syndrome" deals with the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Temple in 70 A.D. The zealots' desperate fight, against both Romans and non-Zealot Jews, has come to embody the ideal of heroic fighting without regard for the consequences; extreme nationalist and messianic elements have made it into their myth. In Israeli literature and art, these historical events have become a symbol for the controversies of the present.

Sobol utilises the technique of a play within a play: a present day theatre group intends to play the zealots whose fanaticism unleashed the storm which ended with the destruction of ancient Jerusalem. While they rehearse, contemporary fanatics arise around them to destroy the modern Jerusalem.

On the evening of Saturday, January 9, the premiere took place, and reality contested the theatre. Among the audience were about fifty Likud and Tehiyah members, many of them prominent, who had bought tickets only in order to disrupt the presentation of the play. The National Theatre Hall in Tel-Aviv became a virtual battlefield, with very real fanatics shouting abuse, lightning fireworks and fist-fighting the rest of the audience, which rallied to protect the actors.

As at the Acre Theatre Festival, the police was slow to intervene, leaving the main task of maintaining order to the theatre employees and volunteers from the audience. Only after being pressured by some Knesset Members, who came to

watch the play, did the police finally remove the intruders.

After the fracas ended, the play did finally start, an hour late. The fanatics on the stage were inevitably compared with those who had been removed from the hall; some felt that, after all, the actors were more convincing since the real fanatics had overacted a bit. By the way, the two Chief Rabbis of Haifa decided that the "Mezuzah" amulets should be taken off the city's Municipal Theatre's doors, because of the prohibition to place them on doors of "toilets, brothels and other places where unclean activities take place".

The tree planters' trial

For several months 13 Israelis and West Bank Palestinians are on trial for "trespassing on state property" after having planted olive trees on lands near the West Bank village of Katana. The lands, cultivated by the villagers, are claimed by the (governmental) "Israel Lands Authority".

The defence succeeded in introducing international treaties and international law into the trial, by the argument that the lands were part of the pre-'67 no man's land between the Israeli and Jordanian armies. A defeat for the state would, therefore, create a precedent for wide tracts of land all along the pre-'67 border.

The court ruled that the map attached to the 1949 Israeli-Jordanian ceasefire agreement must be consulted. The prosecution was supposed to approach the Foreign Ministry's archives, where this map is kept. After several months the prosecutor requested, instead, that the trial be put off for an indefinite period.

The Anti-Peace Trial

At the Ramlah Court, the defence -- conducted by lawyers Amnon Zichroni, Avigdor Feldman and Dov Chinin -- started presenting its case. The four Israelis, accused of meeting PLO representatives in Romania, testified in their own defence.

The text of the Anti-Peace Law requires, in order to obtain a conviction, positive proof that the accused met with the representatives of "a terrorist organization", knowing them to be such. In his testimony, Latif Dori challenged the prosecution to prove this point. The following exchange, during Dori's cross-examination, was the result:

Prosecutor: Do you know the journalist Oded Lifschitz?

Dori: Yes, I have worked with him for many years.

Prosecutor: Was he a member of the delegation which went to Romania?

Dori: Yes.

Prosecutor: Do you believe his reporting to be reliable?

Dori: Yes.

Prosecutor: Well then, I have here Lifschitz's article on the meeting in Romania, as published in *Al-Hamishmar*. In it, he writes that Imad Shakur, Yasser Arafat's personal adviser, said to the Israelis: "You can tell people in Israel that you found, in the PLO delegation here, a hand reaching out for peace." Did you, Latif Dori, hear Shakur say these words?

Dori: Yes.

Prosecutor: So, at least from this moment on, you knew that the persons in front of you were members of an official delegation of the PLO. Why, then, did you not immediately pack your bags and go back to Israel in order to avoid breaking the law?

Dori: Going away was the very last thing I would have done at that moment. As a peace activist, I have waited a long time to hear such a statement from the PLO.

Prosecutor: But didn't you know that it is forbidden by the law to meet members of the PLO?

Dori: The law forbids meetings with members of terrorist organizations. I do not regard the PLO as such. The PLO is for me the national leadership of the Palestinian people.

Ya'el Lotan, also testifying in her own defence, produced an interesting bit of evidence: a defence of terrorism found in a long-forgotten article written by Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzchak Shamir. In it appear such phrases as: "Terrorism is usually considered to be an illegal act. But what are laws? A large part of the law books are but a disguise for a terrorist rule. Those in power can enact whatever law they want; anyone breaking these laws is "a terrorist" (...). The true terrorist sits behind his pile of papers, behind the laws he made." This article was published in an underground Hebrew newspaper in 1943. At that time, Shamir directed the armed struggle of the "terrorist" group Lochamey Herut Yisrael (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) and was hunted by the British colonial police.

Ya'el Lotan happens to be the daughter of Binyamin Eli'av, who in

the 1940s edited a nationalist newspaper supporting that same "terrorist" organization headed by Shamir. She also mentioned in her defence the name of the street where she lives: Dov Groner Street. Dov Groner was executed by the British as a terrorist.

Several more sessions of the trial took place between January 18 and 20. The witnesses included the defendants Reuven Kaminer and Eliezer Feiler, who also testified in their own defence.

In order to prove the defence's contention that the PLO is not a terrorist organization, four "expert witnesses" were invited as well: the orientalist Prof. Yehoshafat Harkabi, former Mapam Knesset Member Victor Shem-Tov, PLP Knesset Member Matti Peled and Dr. Sari Nusseibeh of Bir-Zeit University. The report of their testimonies will have to wait until our next issue.

Meetings abroad

- In Cuba -

Between December 15 and 17, Knesset member Matti Peled participated in a seminar on the Question of Palestine, held at Havana under U.N. auspices. Peled was the only Israeli speaker; the PLO was represented by Shafik Al-Hut, the organizations's Beirut representative. The seminar, scheduled months in advance, was overshadowed by events in the occupied territories; on the opening day, five Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip.

The seminar's participants came from all over Latin America, except the countries under military dictatorship. A recurring theme was the Israeli government's aid to dictatorships and fascist movements, an aid manifested not only in supplies of arms, but also in systematic training given by the Israeli security services to the secret police of these countries. It was made clear that, by this policy, Israel has built up a hatred of itself throughout Latin America - a hatred which could not easily be removed.

Aside from the seminar, KM Peled met with officials of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, with members of such institutions as The Cuban Organization for Friendship Among the Peoples and The Institute for Middle Eastern and North African

Studies, and with representatives of the Cuban Jewish community.

From Havana, Matti Peled went on to Belgrade. There he joined the nine other members of an Israeli delegation which he headed.

- In Yugoslavia -

The following is the communique published by the Israeli delegation to Yugoslavia on December 23, 1987.

The Israeli delegation to Yugoslavia came on December 18 as the guest of the Section for Foreign Relations of the Federal Conference of the Socialist Alliance of the Working People (SAWP) of Yugoslavia. During five days it had the opportunity to meet with leaders of the Yugoslav society and visit important institutions and organizations in Belgrade and Ljubljana.

In the course of its visit the delegation had the occasion to exchange views with its host, Mr. Mirko Ostojic', with Dr. Miran Mejak, President of the Yugoslav inter-Parliamentary Group, Mr. Majan Orozen, member of the Presidency of the Federal Council of the Federation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia, Mr. Joze Smole, President of the Conference of the Socialist Alliance of the Republic of Slovenia, and their associates.

The delegation found most interesting the visits at the University of Belgrade, the Institute for International Politics and Economics, the Municipal Conference of the SWAP of Belgrade, the Center for Theory and Practice of Self-management and the Institute for Ethnic Studies.

The delegation was glad to pay a visit to the Union of Jewish Communes in Yugoslavia, where it participated in the ceremony of lighting the fifth candle of Chanuka.

In the course of the discussions were reviewed the relations between Israel and Yugoslavia, the influence of the Arab-Israeli conflict on these relations and particularly that of the Palestinian problem.

The delegation expressed the opinion that the severance of diplomatic relations between the two countries, subsequent to the war of 1967, has caused the absence in Israel of a Yugoslavian embassy which could play, by its very presence, an important role in the search for peace. The delegation found itself in agreement with its hosts that the present Israeli occupation of the territories conquered in 1967 constitutes an obstacle to peace. However, the

delegation felt that the continuation of the severance of relations does not necessarily contribute to the desired change in Israeli policy.

The delegation welcomes the willingness, expressed to it during its sojourn in Yugoslavia, to bring about closer contacts between the peoples of Yugoslavia and Israel in all fields - cultural, social and commercial - and hopes that its visit would facilitate the achievement of this goal.

The delegation expresses its warmest thanks to the Socialist Alliance for its kind invitation, as well as to all individuals, institutions and organizations who have contributed to the success of the visit. The warmth and friendliness, shown to it throughout the visit, are deeply appreciated by the delegation. All members of the delegation express the hope that further steps would soon be taken, on both sides, to enhance the process of building bridges of understanding and cooperation between our peoples.

The delegation consisted of the following members:

1. Mattityahu Peled MK (PLP) head of the delegation.
2. Aharon Har'el MK (Labor).
3. Mordechai Virshovsky MK (Ratz).
4. Amira Sartani MK (Mapam).
5. Vered Har'el (East for Peace).
6. Dahlia Rabikovitz (Poet).
7. Shimon Ballas (Writer).
8. Mariam Mar'i (Educator).
9. Amnon Zichroni (Advocate).
10. Teddy Preuss (Journalist).

Nuclear Disarmament in the Middle East

Mordechai Vanunu, the former nuclear technician at the Dimona reactor, succeeded in placing the nuclear issue on the Israeli public agenda. Since 1957 the Israeli government has maintained a nuclear facility at Dimona, under close security and without allowing any kind of international inspection; it has refused to sign the treaty for the non-proliferation of nuclear arms.

In the international press, rumors persisted about the Israeli govern-

ment's development of a nuclear capacity, and about nuclear tests it has secretly conducted in cooperation with the South-African regime. In Israel itself, however, the government denied these rumors and succeeded, by means of tight military censorship, to keep the citizens uninterested in nuclear armament and its implications. The Israeli peace movement, for its part, had its hands full protesting the government's use of "conventional" violence; it could spare little time and energy to the task of developing public consciousness on the Middle East nuclear arms race.

Vanunu's revelation that Israel possesses between 100 and 200 nuclear bombs added little to what was already known to experts, but it was the first testimony of an eyewitness who had himself worked several years at Dimona. Since his kidnapping by the Israeli security services, Vanunu's long, isolated imprisonment and the complete secrecy surrounding his trial have kept the issue alive in the Israeli and world media. As the trial approaches its end, the testimonies - behind closed doors - by former Foreign Minister Abba Eban and the present one, Shimon Peres, have renewed public attention; so did also the appearance of the internationally-known nuclear scientist Frank Barnaby. Although much of the attention is directed towards trivial aspects, it does create a better possibility for starting a thorough discussion of the whole nuclear issue.

On November 25, 1987, K.M. Matti Peled called upon the Knesset to express no confidence in the government, for its failure to join the efforts to reach a nuclear disarmament agreement in the Middle East:

At the U.N. General Assembly, Egypt proposed to declare the Middle East a nuclear-free zone. Israel made no response to this proposal and, as far as I know, even made no reference whatsoever to it. This indifference is astonishing. (...) It seems that the Israeli government has not yet realized that nuclear disarmament is a vital interest of the state of Israel; that such a disarmament will safeguard Israel's existence as much as the existence of any other country in the region. The Israeli government's outright rejection of the Egyptian proposal can only be described as a deed of irresponsible arrogance.

(...)In the June issue of "Technology Review", Frank Barnaby estimated Israel's nuclear arsenal as being on the same level as those of China, Britain and France. This would mean that a nuclear war could already break out in the Middle East.

The government seems to believe that the absence of nuclear arms in the Arab countries safeguards Israel. This was the underlying assumption behind the 1981 decision to bomb the Iraqi nuclear reactor. But this assumption is basically wrong. The danger facing Israel is not just a war in which nuclear arms are used, but a war conducted through weapons of mass destruction in general - nuclear or chemical.

Israel has no monopoly over weapons of mass destruction. Iraq alone produces each month 60 tons of "mustard gas", and four tons each of the lethal nerve gases "sarin" and "tabun". Syria, too, possesses gases of a kind considered a weapon of mass destruction. According to the NATO doctrine, a gas attack on cities would justify a nuclear retaliation. It may be assumed that a similar doctrine is guiding Israeli policy.

Thus - even if we assume that no Arab country will ever possess nuclear arms - Arab countries already do have weapons of mass destruction which may be used in war and require nuclear retaliation! Is this not reason enough for Israel to have an urgent interest in achieving a nuclear disarmament in the Middle East?

In this context "nuclear disarmament" includes the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, chemical as well as nuclear. On these very days when the two superpowers are negotiating about disarmament and reaching important agreements, we see simultaneous negotiations about both nuclear disarmament and elimination of chemical weapons. This is natural, since these two types of weapon are inseparable.

The Israeli government's illusion that its nuclear superiority makes Israel immune from all types of weapons of mass destruction is a most dangerous error in strategic thinking.

It seems that the Israeli government is less concerned with Arab countries having chemical weapons at their disposal than with the possibility of these countries possessing nuclear arms. But even so, it is fallacious to assume that Israel could prevent the appearance of nuclear

arms in the Arab world by an indefinite series of bombings on nuclear reactors [such as the 1981 bombing in Iraq]. (...)

Israel has, or might eventually have, more sophisticated bombs, such as thermonuclear or hydrogen bombs, with a force equivalent to 100,000 or 200,000 tons of TNT. This, however, should not be relied on for safety. The simple truth is that no city in the Middle East is "worth" such a bomb. A 20 kiloton bomb is quite sufficient to completely obliterate each one of the Middle East cities - Israeli or Arab - and kill its total population. (...)

Therefore, Israel's nuclear "wealth" is detrimental to its future, and would in no way help its survival in a war of mass destruction. The same is true, of course, for the "wealth" in chemical weapons of some Arab countries. In face of these grave dangers, is it not natural to search for any possibility of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East?

However, according to the rumors which the government itself is leaking to the world media, ever newer and more sophisticated types of nuclear weapons are being developed. The transition to thermonuclear bombs is a mad adventure, whose only reason is the ambition of scientists to reach the limit of their scientific and engineering potential, disregarding the expenditure of the state's resources and the terrible dangers to which they expose their country. (...). All these, when none of the opposing sides can ensure the safety of its civilian population.

There is another concern which touches the civilian population. It is well known that intensive operation of a nuclear reactor, such as the one at Dimona, creates a great amount of radioactive waste, a dangerous material of which no further use is possible. All over the world, the problem of disposing of such waste is causing big debates; there is a view that all nuclear development should be stopped until a satisfactory solution for this problem is found.

In Dimona, the reactor was operated for many years. Its yield was increased from 26 megawatts to 150, according to experts who examined the data supplied by Vanunu. Also, a large quantity of plutonium was produced. There can be no doubt that highly radioactive waste was produced as well. What happened to this waste? Was it

buried somewhere in the Negev? Was it thrown into the sea? Is it still deposited at the reactor itself? In each of these cases, there is a danger of a nuclear catastrophe, not by explosion but by contamination.

I am not ready to believe that a satisfactory solution for the problem of nuclear waste, a solution not found anywhere else, was secretly found in Israel. The Israeli public has the right to know: where is the radioactive waste deposited? (...)

The best answer to all these questions is for Israel to express its willingness to participate in Middle-Eastern nuclear disarmament. (...) This could be achieved by supporting the Egyptian proposal that the United Nations will declare the Middle East a nuclear-free zone. From that a series of moves should follow, by which all concerned states would eventually adopt measures ensuring that the region will be, indeed, free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Of course, it would have been preferable to enact such measures through direct negotiations between governments, but disarmament should not be made conditional on such negotiations, as the Israeli government is repeatedly doing. As long as direct negotiations are not possible, measures should be taken through agreements between each government and the U.N.

This process would have been easier had the Israeli government agreed to sign the treaty for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, as other Middle East countries have done. The adherence to the treaty by all governments in the region should be the first step - as, indeed, the Egyptian proposal stipulates. Once all Middle East states have signed the treaty, the International Atomic Energy Agency would have the power to send inspectors and carry out the projected U.N. resolution on Middle-Eastern nuclear disarmament. There is no doubt that the very announcement of Israeli adherence to the Egyptian proposal will decrease the tension and the growing fear of a Middle-Eastern nuclear war.

Unfortunately, the government of Israel is ignoring both the problem and the possibilities of solving it. (...) Therefore, I propose to express the Knesset's lack of confidence in the government, for its irresponsible treatment of this serious problem.

Matti Peled

Did Peres 'get the message'?

On December 30, 1987, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres twice stated that starting negotiations with the PLO would be quite easy for the Israeli government, since the PLO is willing to negotiate with Israel. First uttered on the Knesset floor, the statement was afterwards repeated before television cameras. But Peres did not accept what may have been expected to be the logical consequence of these words. On the contrary, he immediately stated that he wants to negotiate with King Hussein of Jordan, and with him only.

Still, his words might mark a new phase. For more than a decade, ever since the PLO started groping in the direction of peace with Israel, all official speakers of the Israeli government – Labor or Likud – did their utmost to discredit these efforts and to claim that peace with the PLO is impossible. It is not clear why Peres chose to break this sacred rule. Whatever his reasons, this statement might eventually have far-reaching consequences.

The following article, which appeared in Ma'ariv on December 20, was written by Yosef ("Tommy") Lapid, known for many years as a leading right-wing columnist.

The shooting young man

The PLO succeeded in injecting into the world media its claim that the riots in the Gaza Strip broke out due to a "deliberate" accident, in which an Israeli truck "intentionally" hit a car transporting Gazan workers, and killed four of them.

This is, of course, only one more PLO fabrication. Another one of these Arab fantasies, which only incited Palestinians and naive foreigners can believe.

Or is it? I am already not so sure. I am already no longer convinced that this is just an Arab fantasy. Was this perhaps really a premeditated murder, and are we in Israel the only ones who don't know?

I keep asking myself this question, ever since I saw on television the

astonishing pictures of the "shooting young man" described as a "member of the security forces", and wearing civilian clothes. He was holding an "Uzi" submachine gun, and shooting – calmly and deliberately – into the bushes, where Arab boys were possibly hiding. They had, a few minutes previously, set fire to tyres on the Gaza Strip's main road near the Erez roadblock. They ran away when they saw the Israeli army's patrol, which accompanied the "shooting youngster".

This happened on the very day in which the army chief-of-staff reiterated his strict orders that shooting at demonstrators should only be done in self-defence. On the very day in which the heads of the state declared that all efforts are made to "calm down" the Gaza Strip. At the time when every Jew in the state of Israel believed, or wanted to believe, that the security forces are behaving with the utmost restraint towards the rioting Arab youths.

Had I read in a foreign newspaper a story by a Gazan, who would have claimed that Israelis, wearing civilian clothes but enjoying the protection of the Army, are holding automatic weapons and shoot indiscriminately at places where youths are hiding – had I read such a story in a foreign newspaper, I would have dismissed it as one more PLO propaganda fabrication, one more Palestinian fiction, one more rotten fruit of the fertile Arab imagination.

It is hardly to be assumed that the Israeli television encountered, by chance, the one and only case of such an astonishing rampage by "a member of the security forces" in the Gaza Strip. If one television crew, cruising at random in the Gaza Strip, had by chance encountered this "Rambo" – then it is but simple common sense to assume that other "heroes" like him were around. This at least partially explains why 13 demonstrators have, so far, been killed in the riots, despite the existence of rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons.

This affair arouses an extremely sad thought – it may be that we no longer know what is happening under our noses. In our name, in our country, things are happening which contradict the reports which we receive, the IDF communiques, the government's declarations. Could it really be that, from now on, we will have to listen to the PLO radio in order to know what truly happened in the territories?

Likud dissent continues

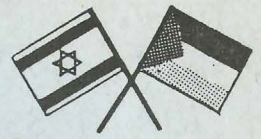
The violence in the occupied territories is sending shock waves throughout the Israeli political system. There is a growing tension between the Labor Party and the Likud, the two main partners in the "national unity government". Inside the parties themselves, "hawks" and "doves" confront each other. That this would happen inside the Labor Party could have been expected, but the Likud block had, until recently, a reputation for not having any "doves" in its ranks. Therefore, a real storm was created by the new group of Likud dissidents, led by Moshe Amirav, known as "Forum for Discussion of Problems of Peace". On January 14, they sent an open letter to Prime Minister – and Likud leader – Shamir, calling upon him to make concessions in order to reach a compromise with the Palestinians.

The furious Likud hardliners immediately started a campaign of threats and intimidation against Amirav's followers. Against Amirav himself, proceedings were opened aimed at expelling him altogether from the party.

Nevertheless, the dissent continues to spread: Shlomo Lahat, the Likud Mayor of Tel-Aviv, came out in favor of handing over the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Jordanian rule, of returning the Golan Heights to Syria, and opening negotiations over the future of East Jerusalem! Lahat is in a strong position inside the Likud because of his being the respected mayor of the Israeli metropolis. It seems that the Likud has no choice but tolerating his heresy, in order to keep control of Israel's biggest municipality.

A third, and most unexpected surprise, came from Likud Knesset Member Ehud Olmert, who declared himself in favor of unilateral withdrawal of the Israeli army from the main cities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and retention of control only over selected strategic points in the territories.

All of these manifestations point in the same direction: as the use of brute force in the occupied territories proves increasingly futile, more and more Likud members feel doubts about their party's program, which forbids to give up even one centimeter of "Greater Israel".



DEEPENING BRUTALIZATION

Since the upsurge in the occupied territories started, Defence Minister Rabin is switching desperately from one method of oppression to another. The first "method" used was the shooting to death of demonstrators. This aroused strong protests inside and outside Israel, and also failed to stop the riots. Palestinian youths continued to demonstrate, day after day, accepting the risk that one or two of their number would not return alive. Indeed, the demonstrations grew bigger, engulfing the entire population of towns, villages and refugee camps.

Next, Rabin employed the "method" of massive arrests and "assembly-line" trials at the military courts, again arousing protests and again failing to achieve the desired "calm". The arrests were followed, in quick succession, by deportations of "inciters" and by curfews, making hundreds of thousands of Palestinians prisoners in their own homes. These, too, failed to bring the rebellious population to its knees, even when the curfews were extended into East-Jerusalem, which officially is part of the State of Israel and not an occupied territory.

The latest device, so far, takes the "strong arm" policy very literal indeed: for the first time Israeli soldiers were, openly and officially, equipped with clubs and ordered to break the bones of Palestinian "troublemakers". On television, hospitals in the occupied territories could be seen, filled with hundreds of Palestinians whose hands, arms and/or legs were broken. Many of them were dragged out of their homes without the flimsiest excuse.

On a visit to the Gaza Strip, Rabin was told by soldiers: "We use the clubs so much that they are breaking". He answered, laughing: "You should use more solid ones"; so Rabin himself afterwards told the press.

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Rabin's policies did find an echo among dark layers of Israeli society. On the political level, he is daily complimented by the speakers of the extreme right. From the army, alarming news arrive of the effect upon the soldiers, who are given free reign for their most cruel and sadistic urges.

GIANT DEMONSTRATIONS

On Saturday, January 23, 1988, two demonstrations against government policies in the occupied territories took place, at Tel-Aviv and Nazareth.

They were the largest peace demonstrations to take place in Israel since 1983.

The Tel-Aviv demonstration was organised by Peace Now. The turnout was at least ten times that of Peace Now demonstrations held a month previously; it was estimated by the organisers at between 80,000 and 100,000. This participation reflects the growing agitation among supporters of the Labor Party.

The main Peace Now speaker, Tzali Reshef, sharply denounced the policies of Labor Defence Minister Rabin. He also called upon the government to negotiate with both Jordan and the PLO. This was the first explicit mention of negotiations with the PLO at a Peace Now rally.

Danny Gal, a reserve batallion commander, spoke with alarm about the corrosive effect of brute force on those who use it.

A guest speaker at the rally was the American poet Alan Ginsberg, who read a poem, quite up to date despite the fact that it was written in 1974.

The Nazareth demonstration was called by the Committee of Arab Mayors, backed by the entire Arab population. The participation was estimated at 35,000, mostly Arabs but with a contingent of Jews who came to express solidarity.

The two demonstrations were coordinated; a Peace Now representative spoke at Nazareth, and at the Tel-Aviv rally the speakers' list included Nimer Hussein, the mayor of Shefaramer and chairperson of the Arab Mayors' Committee.

At the Nazareth rally, Knesset Member Abd-el-Wahab Darawsha announced his decision to quit the Labor Party. He declared himself unable to stay in one party with Defence Minister Rabin. He called upon Labor doves to follow him.

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