



The Other Israel

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INTIFADA AT GENEVA

Tel-Aviv, 15.12.1988

At the last moment before this issue goes into print, the entire editorial which was scheduled to appear on this page became outdated and had to be scrapped. As these lines are being written, history is made. At Geneva, a years-long process has borne fruit; the PLO's commitment to peace can no longer be doubted. Thus were vindicated decades of effort by dedicated Israelis and Palestinians, some of whom gave their lives to make Israeli-Palestinian peace possible.

It is no accident that the PLO's recognition of Israel, so eagerly awaited over so many years, has come about as the Intifada enters its second year. At Geneva, Yasser Arafat stood as the leader of a people which suffered untold deprivations without losing its determination to be free – making this recognition not an act of submission, but the generous gesture of an equal.

The road to peace remains long and hard. The government of Israel still maintains its intransigent refusal to make peace. Sadly, some human beings who now live and breath will still become victims, before the conflict is finally ended. Nevertheless, the end is in sight; on the horizon can be dimly perceived a new era, a time in which views and visions like those expressed on these pages will become a commonplace, the boring clichés of the new Israel.

The Editor

Declaration of Palestinian Independence: *Symbolism and Realism*

The period of time that has elapsed since the proclamation of Palestinian independence at the 19th PNC session (Algiers, 12-15 November, 1988) allows us to examine the significance of that event in view of the ensuing political developments.

Those who try to play down the event argue that it is, at best, of a merely symbolic value, and does not reflect – let alone materialize – any political assets. It seems, however, that such belittlement reflects just the wishful thinkings of those observers, as well as their political shortsightedness.

True, the significance of the proclamation of Palestinian independence is, to a large extent (though not

exclusively) symbolic, but it would be unrealistic to overlook the tremendous value of symbolic gestures in the history of peoples fighting for their freedom. The identification of Palestinian masses everywhere with the set of symbols expressed by that proclamation is in itself a powerful political asset, which will undoubtedly stamp its impact on the continuation of the Palestinian struggle and the chances for its success.

But, beyond that, the proclamation of Palestinian independence has already achieved some very tangible results that must be taken into account in any assessment of the political moves that are predicted in the arena of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

► *Firstly, the very convocation of the PNC, and the broad Palestinian consensus crystallized towards the 19th session and during its course, constitute an impressive and unequivocal evidence of the exclusive representativeness of the PLO and of the authoritative status of its leadership, personified by Chairman Yasser Arafat.*

► *Secondly, the unity of the Palestinian ranks has been solidified, when even the radical factions that had had certain reservations of the political document (attached to the proclamation of independence) demonstrated an exemplary national loyalty and made it perfectly clear that – irrespective of their objections – they,*

Talk Peace with the PLO Now!

The Algiers session helped the Peace Now leaders overcome their hesitations openly to advocate negotiations with the PLO: November 23, a campaign for negotiations with the PLO was started under the slogan:

There is a Partner for Discussion!

In advertisements the Prime Minister and cabinet members were accused of distorting the facts of Algiers in order to blind the public.

In Jerusalem, at November 30, during a meeting in which hundreds of activists were present – as well as members of the press – was announced that Peace Now activists are going to meet with members of the PNC next month. One of the speakers, professor Shaul Friedlander, expressed hope that the Intifada would ultimately bring about a shift in Israeli perceptions. Among the speakers was also Professor Sari Nusseibeh of Bir Zeit University.

In another meeting, held in Tel-Aviv on December 7, the most significant feature was the speech of Chaim Zadok, a former Justice Minister and senior member of the Labor Party, who, cautiously but clearly, supported the idea of eventual negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

Zadok's appearance heralded the start of a new process: the Labor party's traditional policy of refusing to talk with the PLO is now being challenged by a growing dovish opposition, led by Labor's Secretary-General Uzi Bar'am and Minister without Portfolio Ezer Weitzman, and supported by at least ten Labor Knesset Members, though the two Labor Leaders, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin, remain, at least officially, opposed to the idea. Open support to the idea of talking with the PLO could, by now, be found among a quarter of the membership of the Israeli Parliament.

too, were committed by the PNC resolutions as a whole. The PLO leadership thus attained what had hitherto seemed impossible, by reconciling the dichotomy between, "unity of the ranks" and "independence of Palestinian decision-making".

► Thirdly, the PLO has manifested a noteworthy sense of statesmanship, by both taking political initiatives that altered its position from defensive to offensive and forced the "other party"

(i.e. Israel) to respond rather than to initiate, and exercising a realistic and flexible approach in the framework of "the art of the possible", without being enslaved to shallow slogans. Most remarkably, the PLO has now, for the first time, endorsed partition of ex-mandatory Palestine between Jews and Arabs, as the principal legal basis for any eventual settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This manifestation of responsible and initiating statesmanship will undoubtedly improve the PLO position in the international community as a reliable partner in the Middle East peace process.

► Fourthly, the Palestinian independence-proclamation has rapidly and effectively filled the legal and administrative vacuum left by the Jordanian disengagement from West Bank affairs. That is an unmistakable signal to the entire international community, the Arab world and Israel, that the occupied territories in Palestine do have a legal sovereign, and Israel can no more claim a legal situation of "no sovereign", as it has actually done ever since the Six-Day War.

All those, and others, are concrete achievements that fall beyond mere symbolism.

In protest memorandi, submitted by the Israeli Foreign Ministry to governments that have either recognized the independent Palestinian State or welcomed the Algiers resolutions, it has been argued that "the PLO resolutions will not promote prospects for a Middle East peace settlement". We are confident that the opposite is true. The PNC resolutions will solidify chances for peace, because they are about to make U.S. and Israeli governments face reality – namely, the existence of a Palestinian-Arab people, entitled to implement its right of self-determination in a state of its own, alongside the State of Israel. The political wisdom underlying the Palestinian proclamation of independence and the attached political document might weaken the grip of traditional Israeli arguments in the world public opinion, and mobilize a worldwide support for a two-state solution. Strengthening international support for the national rights of the Palestinian people, alongside the rights of the people of Israel, does not undermine chances for peace. To the contrary: it promotes them, by encouraging justice and political flexibility and condemning trends of oppression, annexation and political intransigence.

It is to be presumed that those who endorsed the Palestinian independence declaration have not entertained illusions that that single event would bring about an immediate change of mind on the part of U.S. and Israeli policy-makers. The road to attain that goal is still long. But the November 15th declaration is certainly a big step in the right direction.

As Israelis, we would prefer to be led by a government that would not turn its back to the cry for justice of another people and would be well aware that our own freedom and security will not be safeguarded as long as the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people continue to be violated. Unfortunately, this is not the case. It appears that the people of Israel and its government are doomed to learn the facts of life the hard way. We congratulate the Palestinian people for the proclamation of their independence, not only because it triggers a series of political processes that might make it easier for Israel to face reality and proceed towards a just peace, which is definitely good for all parties concerned.

Yossi Amitay

Dialogue update

On November 10, 1988, the Tel-Aviv District Court rejected the appeal by Latif Dori, Yael Lotan, Eliezer Feiler and Reuven Kaminer – who had been earlier sentenced in what became known as "the Anti-Peace Trial" to six months imprisonment and a fine of 4000 New Israeli Shekels (about \$2500) each. This, for having participated in a meeting with a PLO delegation in Roumania on November 7, 1986, thereby, it was claimed, violating the (then) new amendment on the "Anti-Terrorist Law" in November, 1986.

The appeal was based on:

Contradictions between the interpretation given by the lower court to the statute and the basic principles of "freedom of expression" and "freedom of political activity";

Supreme Court rulings which show aversion to the creation of "crimes" without "criminal intent" (therefore, the "anti-terrorist amendment" should not be interpreted as prohibiting meetings regardless of their intent, but only meetings which could be shown to have encouraged terrorism);

Lack of verifiable evidence that the PLO is a terrorist organization;

The lower court's decision not to let the defence challenge the auto-

matic existence of an uninterrupted "state of emergency" in the country – since 1949 (the "ant-terrorist act" only being in force as long as the "state of emergency" continues)..

In the explanation, Judge Hadassah Ben-Ito writes: *There is no dispute over (...) the fact that the appellants participated in the meeting in order to stress the need to achieve peace in order to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to bring an end to bloodshed in the area (...). I am aware that we are discussing an amendment which met with the strongest of opposition from eminent jurists who were of the opinion that it could serve (...) to open the path to political dictatorship. Indeed, this law does infringe on the freedom of the individual but it is not the task of the court to weigh this matter in place of the legislature.*

While rejecting one by one the arguments of the appeal on formal grounds, the judges declare – almost spitefully – that the court is not allowed to twist the language of the statute and to distort its declared objective, even if it believes that the law is undesirable and unnecessary and even if it is convinced that the law needlessly infringes on the freedom of the individual and a basic right of the citizen (...) *Indeed we do not have common "criminals" before us. We are talking about people with strong political views, who reveal a personal commitment in public life (...) people who proved that their aspirations are for peace (...).*"

Permission was granted to appeal to the Supreme Court. The four can be supported in their struggle for dialogue and peace and against draconian laws, via Committee to save the Peace Dialogue (CSPD) P.o.box 20395, Tel-Aviv 61204, Israel.

At the end of August, the fifth conference of NGO's (Non-Governmental Organizations) on the Palestinian question took place at the U.N. headquarters in Geneva. There was an unprecedented number of Israeli participants, about seventy – many of them new activists, moved by the Intifada. Israeli and Palestinian participants met all the time in workshops, corridors and the cafeteria, maintaining a dialogue (or telling each other jokes). At the conclusion of the three-day conference Khaled al-Hassan delivered a speech to the gathered 500 participants from all over the world. Unlike some of the more peripheral supporters of the

Palestinian cause, the senior PLO diplomat spoke heart-warming and conciliatory words. After the speech Israelis came, one by one, to shake hands with Khaled al-Hassan – which attracted the attention of some press photographers. The handshakes caused a great stir in the Israeli media.

The visit of Abie Nathan to Tunis and, subsequently, his second meeting with Yasser Arafat in Strassbourg aroused a great deal of interest. Nathan is one of the best-known figures in the Israeli public scene. He owns the "Voice of Peace" radio station and was – until now – careful to confine his many activities to the pursuit of peace in a general and abstract sense, without committing himself to any controversial issue. By meeting with Arafat, Nathan took considerable risks.

On Nathan's return rightist extremists, waving hangman's nooses, clashed, at Ben Gurion airport, with peace demonstrators who were calling out to him "Welcome, hero of peace!" On the following day, Nathan was interrogated by the police.

Abie Nathan – who probably was the "copywriter" of the Hebrew Happy New Year greetings expressed by Arafat in Strassbourg – already made a second visit to Tunis.

On October 14, a delegation of the Progressive List for Peace, led by Knesset Members Muhammad Miari and Matti Peled, met in Belgrade with a PLO Delegation, headed by Mahmoud Abas (Abu-Mazen), member of the PLO Executive Committee. The meeting, in which views and appraisals of political developments in the area were exchanged, was held under the auspices of the Yugoslav Socialist Alliance. In a statement, published simultaneously by the Progressive List in Tel-Aviv and by the PLO office in Belgrade, the two delegations agreed that a just political solution should be based on "recognition of the Palestinian People's legitimate national rights – primarily, the inalienable right to self-determination and to the creation of its independent and sovereign state on the territory of its homeland, alongside the State of Israel, East Jerusalem being the Palestinian State's Capital".

In December, a meeting organised by the Czechoslovak Institute of

International Relations in Prague aimed at simulating an International Peace Conference on the Middle East. Among the Israeli participants was former Knesset Member Mordechai Bar-On of Ratz, together with representatives of Mapam, Peace Now, the Communist Party and the Arab Mayors' Committee. The PLO participants included Khaled al-Hassan and Abu Sharif.

The senior Soviet diplomat Vladimir Vinogradov and the former U.S. Attorney-General Ramsay Clark were present together with many participants from Britain, France, Egypt, and other countries.

So far, none of the participants in these meetings has been prosecuted. It seems that the police and state prosecution prefer to wait for the results of the Romania Four's Supreme Court appeal.

Israelis for recognition

A few days after the PNC Algiers session, several hundred Israelis signed the following petition, which was sent to the heads of the governments of the European Community:*

We, the undersigned Israeli citizens, view with favor the recent decision of the Palestine National Conference. As Israelis, we encourage you to immediately recognize the newly declared Palestinian state. This new state does not threaten Israel. In fact, its very existence is the only way to achieve a lasting Middle East peace. Your country's act of recognition will help pave the road to negotiations and peace.

**The petition's organisers can be contacted at P.O.B. 51358, Jerusalem*

On trial

The trial of the four *Derech Ha-Nitzotz/Tariq A-Sharara* editors, Michal Schwartz, Ronnie Ben Efrat, Assaf Adiv and Yakov Ben Efrat, is presently at the stage of the "little trial", a procedure the aim of which is to examine the acceptability of the confessions which three of the defendants signed during interrogation.

The star witness in this procedure has been Superintendent Gad Waterman of the Israeli police, who introduced himself as the chief investigator of the Nitzotz case. While appearing self-confident and even cocky during his questioning by prosecutor Uzi Hanson, Waterman began to stammer and tangle himself when cross-examined by leading defense attorney Felicia Langer*. Langer's questioning focused on the interrogation of Michal Schwartz,

who was arrested on 27 April. In her opening statement, Langer said that Schwartz was held in solitary confinement, in an ant-ridden cell measuring 4 square metres, denied access to legal counsel, prevented from washing or changing her clothes for 3 days, urged to commit suicide by a Shin bet interrogator and was denied sleep for days on end. Sexual insults and threats were routine, and on one occasion interrogator "Abu Sharif" blew smoke rings at her breasts.

Waterman admitted that interrogations continued throughout the night, that "Abu Sharif" blew smoke rings (although denying that these were aimed at Schwartz' chest), and that he used his professional qualifications as a psychologist to phrase forged notes passed to the defendants, seemingly written by Ya'akov Ben Efrat, urging them to confess so as to save him from terrible tortures. Waterman also admitted that he did not conduct a chronological report about the investigation, (as required of police interrogators by law) and most importantly, that he concealed vital information from a Supreme Court Judge - namely, that Schwartz had immediately recanted her "confession". His cross examination will continue on December 14th, when the trial re-opens.

During the last court session a new appeal for the four on bail was heard before District Court Judge Zvi Tal, who heads the bench of three judges hearing the case. Tal ruled to release them into house arrest, though with heavy restrictions and high bail (\$30,000) each. However, this decision was overruled by Supreme Court Judge Shlomo Levine on grounds of "the essence of the offenses". They will therefore remain in detention until the end of the trial, which is expected to continue for several months.

Rayna Moss

*The Nitzotz defendants are also represented by adv. Hussein Abu Hussein and Meir Morgenstern.

Mahmoud Masarwa, a 45-year old Arab citizen of Israel and a carpenter by trade, is a member of a small Socialist group, advocating joint revolutionary action by Jewish and Arab workers. He was able to put his ideas into practice at the cement factory where he worked, in which he was among the leaders of a strike and won the confidence of Jewish and Arab workers alike. In July 1988, Masarwa was detained, a few days

before he was due to set out on a lecture tour in Britain, at the invitation of members of the British Labour Party.

A special fund to aid the Nitzotz detainees and support the struggle for freedom of the press has been set up. Contributions may be sent to:

The Fund for Freedom of the Press, PO Box 4362, Tel-Aviv,
or: Account no. 262247, Bank Ha-Poalim, Branch 532, Tel-Aviv.

The 44-page brochure "Silencing of an Opposition - the case of "Derech HaNitzotz", is available from P.O.B. 1575, Jerusalem

Special tape-recorded press releases may be obtained by phone: 972-2-241888, during (Israeli) working hours (the dates of the next trial sessions being: December 21, 28, 29, January 5, and 12).

A court order was issued, forbidding the Israeli press from publishing the very fact of Masarwa's arrest. Abroad, however, it was published extensively, by Masarwa's intended British hosts. In October, a delegation composed of British and Danish Members of Parliament and trade unionists visited Israel, met with representatives of the PLP, Mapam, Ratz, and the Communist party, and succeeded to breach the censorship screen. It has now been published that Masarwa is accused of espionage. The nature of his alleged acts is still secret and is likely to remain so, since the entire trial will, most likely, be held in camera. After two lawyers were not accepted by the court for lack of "security clearance" Adv. Avigdor Feldman has taken up the case.

Donations to help cover the legal expenses to:

Mahmoud Masarwa Defence Campaign, POB 524, London E2.

Messages of support to Mahmud Masarwa, Prison No 0018. 342 Space 3, Prison Nizan, Prison Service, Ramle, Israel.

In October 1988 began the trial of Michael Warshawski, director of the Jerusalem-based "Alternative Information Centre", accused of publishing the newspapers of Palestinian students' and women's organizations in the West Bank. According to the secret services, these organizations have an "affinity" to George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. While giving services to such organizations caused Warshawski highly unpleasant, months-long interrogations, the organizations themselves were not illegal at the time.

A year and half passed since the police raid on the centre, in February 1987. It took the prosecution a long time to put together a case against Warshawski. In the first court sessions, much of the prosecution's evidence was found to be inadmissible, the judges indicating their displeasure. It seems likely that the prosecution will have to drop one of the charges, that of "possessing material belonging to illegal organizations".

When the trial resumes, in February, Warshawski still faces the charges of "being a supporter of a terrorist organization" with a maximum penalty of 3 years, and "giving services to an illegal association" - maximum penalty: 10 years.

Hillel Bardin, a reserve officer, became nauseated by the daily violence and the job his unit was doing in the West bank town of Ramallah. He opened negotiations with Palestinians in the part of the town where his unit was stationed, offering them a deal: the soldiers would not interfere with demonstrations and political meetings, as long as they would stay peaceful. The arrangement apparently worked for some weeks, until settlers found out and made it known to the press. Thereupon, Bardin was placed behind bars, charged with "exceeding his authority by conducting negotiations (*instead of shooting*) on his own initiative". The army in Ramallah - and the Palestinian demonstrators - resumed their "normal" behaviour.

Ongoing protest

Normally, during election campaigns the attention and energy of peace activists are largely diverted toward the campaigns of peace-minded parties. These elections, however, were held under the shadow of the Intifada: all through the elections period, organizations such as "Down with the Occupation" and "Women in Black" continued to hold weekly vigils and solidarity visits to the occupied territories, and the Peace Groups Coordinating Committee, which was established before the big June 5 demonstration (*see no. 32, p.5*) has now become permanent.

About 200 peace activists from all over the country gathered at the Neve-Tzedek theatre to discuss issues such as: refusal of military service and non-violent resistance; the struggle against draconian legislation;

women's participation in protest activities – through the general movement or through special women's groups; the role of professional associations and trade unions; the situation among youths and students; art and literature, theatre and music as channels for raising political issues; the structure of the coordinating committee. The discussion continues on the pages of its newly-established periodical *Mecha'ah* (Protest)*.

One of the main campaigns undertaken by the combined peace groups was directed against the deportation of Palestinians. The Labour Party headquarters was picketed to protest that party's support of Labor Defence minister Rabin, who signed the deportation orders; on October 7, thousands marched through Tel-Aviv's main streets under the slogan: DON'T DEPORT THEM – SPEAK WITH THEM!

Another march took place on December 10, to mark one year of Intifada; after arrival at the municipality square a crowd of thousands observed a moment of silence in memory of those who paid with their life, namely 362 Palestinians and 6 Israelis.

* *The Peace Groups Coordinating Committee could be contacted through Mecha'ah, 48/c Tshernichovski St., Jerusalem 292585; tel: 02-244323.*

On December 2, about 500 Israeli women, members of different groups, gathered in Jerusalem. Among the subjects on the agenda were: the connection between women's liberation and national liberation. Why a women's peace movement? Is there a connection between feminism and non-violence? Feminism and a militaristic society, etc. Also present were women of Palestinian women's organizations from the West Bank.

One of the speakers presented statistical evidence showing a simultaneous rise in acts of violence by soldiers in the occupied territories, and in cases of rape inside Israel. The meeting concluded by setting up a network, with a view to establishing a wide-based women's peace movement.

On December 3, about 30 members of "Down with the Occupation" tried to enter Malik village on the West Bank, which had been under continual curfew since the Palestinian Declaration of Independence on November 15, but soldiers barred their entry in

a violent confrontation.

Villagers, who succeeded to evade the army, later told the peace activists that – while their electricity had been cut – the army did not allow them to light candles at night.

The emblem of the ICIPP, showing the interlocking Israeli and Palestinian flags (appearing on *The Other Israel's* front page) has in one form or another been adopted by many other organizations working for Israeli-Palestinian peace, and it appears on placards, T-shirts, stickers and buttons. On two recent occasions – November 19, 29 and December 15 – the Jerusalem police disrupted the "Down with the Occupation" vigils and arrested demonstrators displaying the emblem. In the eyes of the police carrying this emblem constituted "identification with a terrorist organization". However, the detainees were, shortly afterwards, released on the basis of the legal precedent – established by the ICIPP in 1983 – when Attorney-General Zamir declared use of the emblem to be legal (see *The Other Israel* no° 4-5, p.6)

Israel's President Chaim Herzog, who after the 1984 elections refused to have any contact with representatives of the openly racist "Kach" party, did invite Recha'am Ze'evi of "Moledet" (Fatherland) – the party which advocates the "transfer" of Arabs. Herzog's explanation of this discrepancy, namely that "transfer" of the Arab population was advocated "through an agreement with the Arabs themselves", did not satisfy the dovish liberal Shinuy party. They held a demonstration at the president's residence accusing Herzog of legitimising racism. In a second demonstration, held during the inauguration of the new Knesset, members of the Labor Party-affiliated youth movements also participated.

On September 10, after several days in which the West Bank town of Kalkilyah was under curfew, Knesset Member Muhammad Miari of the PLP was allowed to enter the town. He sent a telegram to Defence Minister Rabin, protesting about the shortage of food in the town and the use of its highschool as a detention center, in which hundreds of youths were incarcerated, humiliated and beaten up by soldiers. Several dozens

of PLP demonstrators arrived at Kalkilya at September 12, but soldiers maintaining the curfew barred their entrance. They held vigils at the western and northern approaches to Kalkilyah, holding Hebrew signs calling upon soldiers to refuse military service in the occupied territories, and signs in Hebrew as well as Arabic condemning the Kalkilyah curfew, the demolition of houses and the deportation of Palestinian inhabitants. A group of settlers from the "Ginot-Shomron" settlement, some of them carrying guns, shouted abuse at the demonstrators – trying (unsuccessfully) to provoke them.

On Shabbat morning 27 November, seven private cars, carrying posters of "Hal'a HaKibush" (Stop the Occupation) went from Tel-Aviv to Gaza. The cars were full of baby-food, toys – not at all a luxury for families under weeks-long curfews! – and medicines, for which the money had been raised in a month-long drive.

It was not the first time that Israeli peace organisations went to the Gaza Strip with food or medicines, where there is a constant lack of these. Therefore, nobody was surprised when after arrival at Erez check-post the Gaza Strip was suddenly declared "closed military area" and the caravan was not allowed to go on.

There were some journalists, and an American television crew. The group started a quiet demonstration, standing with posters behind boxes of toys. After an hour, guests: a carload of flag waving, cursing and shouting Techiyah supporters. After another hour, in which the two groups stood there, facing each other, everybody went home. The cargo of the cars, however, did reach its destination. Indeed, most of the medicines had been brought to Gaza at seven in the morning without attracting the army's attention.

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Inside the army

Yesh Gvul – the organization of reserve soldiers who refuse to serve in the occupied territories, which provides legal advice to jailed refuse-niks with and gives some financial support to their families – received the 50th case since the beginning of the Intifada. These fifty are the ones who actually were sent to jail; in many more cases the reservist's unit-officer decided to play down the protest by changing the destination where the reserve service is to do fulfilled.

David Golan, 38-year old, married and father of a child, stated in his trial: *I find no moral right to deny others the dignity and independence I seek for myself. That which is hateful to you do not do to others.*

In Miami, Florida, the local chapter of New Jewish Agenda, together with women's organisations and peace groups "adopted" Golan. This adoption followed a U.S. tour by two Yesh Gvul representatives, Peretz Kidron and Meir Amor, who visited

20 cities, were interviewed by dozens of newspapers, radio and TV stations, which did not at all please the Israeli Government's American lobby.

Kibbutznik Dudu Palma (39-year old, married, four children) sees the prison's inside for the second time this year in order to *defend our fragile democracy, which is swept to the precipice by the rising tide of nationalism and fundamentalism.*

Yitzchak Ben-Aharon, veteran leader of the Labour-affiliated Kibbutz Movement, strongly protested Palma's imprisonment and praised his bravery and idealism. Such a position is unprecedented for a person like Ben-Aharon, a former Secretary-General of the Histadrut (trade union federation), and one of the Labour Party's respected "elder statesmen". Up to now, all kibbutz and Labour leaders have invariably condemned refusal and taken the position that "soldiers must obey orders".

Yesh Gvul's can be contacted through P.O.B. 91068, Jerusalem 6953, Israel.

they did "in order to vent their frustration", and that the old man's death was caused by further beating which he received from other soldiers at the installation. The four's main line of defence is that they have received explicit orders to beat up Palestinians, while arresting them, and that the entire chain of command, at least as far up as brigadier-general Tzvi Poleg, in charge of the entire Gaza Strip, knew about these orders and approved of them.

Sources inside the army command have shown disquiet at the course the trial is taking, terming it "a Pandora's box" (*Al HaMishmar*, 9-10-88).

While the trial was taking place a new recruit, 18-years old private Asher Avital, was added to the ranks of the "purple berets". After three days in Gaza he escaped from the unit and gave himself up to the military police refusing to go back or to do any other military service in the occupied territories. He was sentenced to 56 days imprisonment.

Total refuser

On December 8, Ephraim Shirman, a 38-years old farmer from Moshav Beit-Oved, was imprisoned for refusing to perform reserve military service and to wear the uniform of the Israeli Defence Forces.

During the last year, Shirman had sent several letters to Defence Minister Rabin, asking to be exempted from military service:

(...) I am not willing to be part of an army of occupation which uses the same kind of methods as were used, in the past, against the Jewish people – such as murder of women and children and the beating to death of old men. For reasons of conscience, I declare my complete resignation from this army which – rather than defend the country – serves as an instrument of brutal rule over and oppression of another people (...)

Shirman was summoned to an investigation, on December 6. He was, on the spot, sent to 14 days' imprisonment, and was also handed new orders, to present himself for a month's military service in the Gaza Strip, after the end of his term of imprisonment. Shirman declared that he would refuse to perform this new service, as well. He also stated that, during his stay in the military prison, he would refuse to wear a uniform. Only when the guards threatened to undress him by force did Shirman put on the uniform but immediately started a hunger strike in protest.

On December 14, pacifist youths together with friends of Shirman and people who sympathized with his struggle picketed the Defence Ministry, demanding that the right of conscientious objection be recognized.

Hillel Bardin, a reserve officer, became nauseated by the daily violence and the job his unit was doing in the West bank town of Ramallah. He opened negotiations with Palestinians in the part of the town where his unit was stationed, offering them a deal: the soldiers would not interfere with demonstrations and political meetings, as long as they would stay peaceful. The arrangement apparently worked for some weeks, until settlers found out and made it known to the press. Thereupon, Bardin found himself in prison charged with "exceeding his authority by conducting negotiations (*instead of shooting*) on his own initiative". The army in Ramallah – and the Palestinian demonstrators – resumed their "normal" behaviour.

A shocking example of what the oppression of the Intifada leads to is given by the much-publicised case of four soldiers of the Giv'ati brigade – also known as "the purple berets" – now being court-martialled.

According to the charge, the four broke into a house in Gaza, beat an old man with their rifle butts and a broomstick, kicked him and jumped up and down on his belly. He was then taken to an army installation, where he died after several hours. The four soldiers do not deny the facts, but claim that they did what

Electoral and other perils

In 1986 a change of the electoral law was proposed, aimed at preventing KM Rabbi Meir Kahane from being re-elected. For that purpose, the Knesset adopted an amendment which gave the Central Election Committee (CEC) the power to disqualify racist and anti-democratic parties. The right-wing parties, however, had succeeded in enforcing a "balanced" version, making it also possible for the CEC to disqualify parties which "do not recognise the character of Israel as the state of the Jewish people".

At the very start of the 1988 elections campaign the right-wing parties Likud and Techiyah launched a drive to prevent the Progressive List for Peace from running. This was based on article 3 of the PLP's program, which states:

The state of Israel belongs to all its citizens: Jews and Arabs, women and men, Oriental and Western Jews, secular and religious. It is up to the state to guarantee complete equality and social justice, in theory and practice, for all its citizens, irrespective of nationality, religion, race, sex, ethnic community or outlook.

This position, the right-wing claimed, amounts to a denial of Israel's Jewish character – even though the PLP program goes on to say:

Disapproved facts

Supreme Court Judge Eliezer Goldberg used his uncontrolled power as the Central Elections Committee's chairman - by censoring again and again the PLP's election broadcasts. When the PLP's KM - and former general - Matti Peled spoke about "the soldiers' right to disobey immoral orders" picture and sound of one sentence were conked out. On October 15, however, more than two-thirds of a broadcast fell pray to such treatment. In this broadcast Chaim Hanegbi, the PLP's parliamentary secretary, showed the Israeli public some recorded fragments of Yasser Arafat and other PLO leaders declaring the PLO's willingness to make peace (see other box).

Several newspapers denounced this banning and published the full text. The PLP's lawyer, Yossi Bard, asked Judge Goldberg to reconsider his decision since the Likud's broadcast showing Arafat holding a gun - in an excerpt from a film made in 1972 - did pass. In his reply to Bard, Goldberg stated:

On October 12, 1980, the government has declared the Palestinian Liberation Organization to be a terrorist organization. Therefore, screening the statements would have constituted an expression of approval and sympathy with a terrorist organization, an offense under article 4.b of the 1948 Prevention of Terrorism Act. (...) The content of [the PLO leaders'] speeches cannot change the essence of the organization which they head, as defined by the government. The situation is completely different regarding electoral lists which present the PLO in a negative light, which fits, rather than contradicts the government's proclamation.

This principle does not contradict the state of Israel being "a Jewish state", in keeping with the guiding principles of the UN Partition Resolution and the Declaration of Independence; or with its being "the state of the Jewish people" in the sense of preservation of the historical and spiritual links of the Jews of Israel with the Jewish people throughout the world.

Further, the Likud and Tachiyah cited the PLP's on-going dialogue with the Palestinian Liberation Organization which, they claimed, proved the party to be "an agent of terrorism". They also quoted statements by PLP members, such as an interview by the PLP parliamentary secretary, Chaim Hanegbi, in which he stated that, within some generations, the state of Israel could lose its Jewish character in a gradual and peaceful process.

According to the electoral law, the CEL is chaired by a judge of the Supreme Court and its forty seats are allocated to representatives of political parties, in proportion to their representation in the Knesset. With the Likud and the rest of the right-wing block committed to support disqualification of the PLP, the

decision hinged on the position taken by the Labor party. The question which attitude to take towards the PLP soon became a central issue in the internal Labor debate. Nissim Zvily, heading Labor's elections propaganda section, wanted the Labor Party to support the PLP's disqualification, in order to "disprove the Likud's claim that the Labor Party is drifting leftwards". Zvily's position, however, remained in the minority; the Labor dovish wing, headed by Minister Ezer Weitzman, prevailed and a special high-level committee, appointed by the Labor leadership, decided to oppose the banning of the PLP. The stage for the big confrontation was laid at the beginning of October.

The CEL, by an overwhelming majority, decided to ban Rabbi Meir Kahane's ultra-racist "Kach" party from running in the elections. On the following day's session, the right-wingers demanded that this anti-racist act be "counterbalanced" by banning the PLP, as well. Five hours of tense debate in the CEL followed. Some Labor hawks tried to side with the rightists, but KM Chaim Ramon, the Labor delegation's leader, succeeded to impose the official party position upon them. There were several confused and disputed votes, in which the chairman, Judge Eliezer Goldberg of the Supreme Court, twice changed his vote, which was to be decisive. At last the right-wing motion was defeated by a majority of 20 to 19.

The Likud and Tachiyah appealed to the Supreme Court against the CEL decision. A special bench of five judges assembled to hear this appeal. Two of the judges - Levin and Eilon - were openly hostile towards the PLP and, at the conclusion, rendered a verdict supporting the PLP's banning; again, however, this position remained in the minority, with three judges, led by the Supreme Court's President, upholding the PLP's right to participate in the elections.

Even after the Supreme Court's decision - rendered on October 18, less than two weeks before election's day - the PLP still suffered from old and new forms of harassment: delivery of various documents and permits, necessary for the campaign, was upheld by the state bureaucracy; the PLP's television broadcasts were repeatedly censored (see boxes); dozens of the PLP's Arab activists were summoned by the Shabak

(Secret Service), and "advised" to find another party; one of the PLP's most effective public speakers, Hasan Jabarin of Umm-el-Fahm, had to stay in prison until three days before the elections as an "administrative" detainee (i.e. without trial), by order of Defence Minister Rabin.

In spite of all these obstacles, the PLP expected to increase its share of the vote and to benefit from the effect of the Intifada on many Jewish and Arab voters. Instead, the vote for the PLP went down, from 38,012 in 1984 to 33,695 in 1988. This drop of 11,4% had grave results: the PLP's second Knesset Member, Matti Peled, lost his seat, leaving the PLP represented solely by KM Muhammad Miari. The PLP's surplus vote of 15,132 (over three quarters of the votes required for a seat!) would have been enough to gain a second seat - but for the electoral law, which gives the big parties a great advantage in the division of "surplus seats", and which - in this case - transferred Matti Peled's seat to the Likud.

The banned broadcast's text:

The following is the complete text of the PLP's controversial broadcast. The banned part appears in bold:

Chaim Hanegbi: The Intifada, which all parties fear so much, is the War of Independence of an oppressed, humiliated and dispossessed people. We believe that the Intifada is Palestinian justice, Palestinian honour, and - above all - that it is the Palestinian voice of peace.

Bassam Abu Sharif: If the occupation is put to an end, I think the solution and the march to peace will start.

Khalid Al-Hassan: We don't want to throw anybody to the sea. We don't want to be thrown to the desert. We want peace, and that could be realised by having a Palestinian independent state. But we are not going to kneel for that. Either we make it by peace negotiations, or we have to struggle for it ...

Yasser Arafat: I accept all U.N. resolutions, including 242 and 338, and I accept the international legality. Who is against international legality?

Chaim Hanegbi: For a long time now, Abu-Sharif, Abu-Ayad, Khaled el-Hasan and even Yasser Arafat himself are expressing a voice of peace, a detailed peace plan for creating a Palestinian state side-by-side with the state of Israel. And what is the Israeli response? Refusal! A big, deep, unequivocal refusal. We call upon peace seekers to discard all preconditions and call with us:

LET'S TALK PEACE WITH THE PLO

In the discussions held inside the PLP after the elections, various possible reasons for the electoral setback were suggested.

Some potential PLP voters may have been attracted by the gradual change in the positions of the moderate peace parties, Mapam and Ratz, who had accepted the principle of negotiations with the PLO – though still with some reservations and preconditions.

The hostile attitude of the (Communist-led) Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (DFPE) towards the PLP might have caused a lot of harm not only to the PLP, but also to the DFPE itself. Despite a fundamental difference in basic ideologies, the PLP and DFPE programs both favour practically the same solution – two states – for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is the main issue of Israeli politics. Nevertheless, the DFPE answered with complete refusal to the offer made by the PLP to sign a “surplus vote agreement” – which is commonly done between parties, who have a more or less similar program, especially smaller ones. Moreover, the DFPE launched a campaign of wild anti-PLP defamation – in two cases degenerating into physical violence.

A further factor, which was underestimated before the elections, was the call by Muslim fundamentalists to boycott the elections to the “infidel Knesset”. In these elections, for the first time, the percentage of voters was lower among Arabs than among Jews – which effected the PLP, many of whose voters come from Muslim Arab communities.

The PLP itself is also to blame for some missed opportunities, such as its decision not to seek a surplus vote agreement with the newly-founded Arab Democratic Party (ADP) of former Labor KM Abd-el-Wahab Darawshe. The majority of the PLP executive regarded Darawshe with suspicion; despite the dramatic way in which he terminated his membership in the Labor Party (see issue n° 30, p.12), many PLP members kept their distance from him, suspecting him of secretly maintaining close contacts with the Labor establishment. In retrospect this does not, after all, seem to be justified. By voting for the ADP, many former Arab Labor voters expressed their complete break with the Labor Party, with whose oppressive policies they could no longer identify in the year of the Intifada; rather than alienated, they should have been made into allies.

Moreover, the elections campaign has exposed serious flaws in the PLP's organizational structure. Thus, for example, the struggle for the PLP's right to run in the elections was mainly carried out by parliamentarians and lawyers; little was done to organise, simultaneously, demonstrations and public meetings – as was successfully done in similar circumstances in 1984 (see *The Other Israel* n° 9, p.4).

Knesset morals

The role of temporary Knesset Speaker – until the permanent one is chosen – is allocated to the oldest Member. Yair Sprinzak, of the newly-created Transfer party used the opportunity to advocate “clearing the Arabs away” while in the same time claiming credit for being the son of his much-respected father.

Fifteen Knesset Members who could more truly claim to be the spiritual inheritors of Sprinzak senior, protested by declaring their commitment to fight racism after saying the official swearing-in text. The additional fact of Yair Sprinzak's lack of understanding of Knesset procedures made up for a noisy and rather ridiculous spectacle. In order to be able to vote for the Knesset Speaker of the next four years, the protesters had to do the ritual all over again. When the four Arab Knesset Members answered in Arabic, a new tumult arose. An hour after his anti-Arab speech Yair Sprinzak had to admit that Arabic officially is the Knesset's second language.

For days the air was full of nationalist extremists suddenly preaching “decency”, “democratic rules” and lamenting “the disgrace of the Knesset”.

The following is an excerpt from former Labour K.M. Abba Eban's reaction (Jer. Post 23/11/88):

The blame for the moral fiasco in the opening session of the Twelfth Knesset (...) belongs to Yair Sprinzak, whose outrageous abuse of his position could not decently have been left without any reaction. If there had been docile silence, the position of the Knesset would have been even worse than it has become.(...)

The “transfer” doctrine [advocates] “to make things so difficult for the Arabs that they will want to go away.” In other words, the programme of Moledet (the official name of the Transfer party) is to suspend the provision for equality of rights among all citizens and to make Israel more like South Africa (...).

The irony is that the Ze'evi-Sprinzak policy is more likely to result in a self-transfer of Jews than in an induced or coercive “transfer” of Arabs. (The number of Israelis leaving the country outnumbers that of “Olim Chadashim” – new Jewish immigrants).

This overconcentration on parliamentary work, to the detriment of activity on the grassroots level, might be a reflection of a deeper problem which the PLP's membership

should face and correct. The election results clearly indicate that a political party with a controversial message needs to work hard on the parliamentary and legal level to secure its existence; but that could not – and should not – replace the building of a strong network which alone can secure a motivated electorate.

In 1984, only two electoral lists adopted programs advocating the two-state solution: the PLP, which got 38,012 votes, and the DFPE, which gained 69,815. In 1988, there were three parties with such a program: the PLP, having 33,695 votes; the DFPE with 84,032 votes, and the ADP – 27,012. Thus, the total number of voters supporting the two-state solution rose from 107,827 in 1984 to 145,009 in 1988. However, due to the division among three parties, without surplus votes agreements, the electoral growth of 35% did not bring about any increase in number of seats: in 1984 there were six (4 DFPE and 2 PLP); in 1988, six again (4 DFPE, 1 PLP, 1 ADP).

The results caused a feeling of frustration among these parties' voters, who had had high hopes from the expected success of the radical peace parties. More than ever, the need for unity and cooperation is felt among the supporters and rank and file activists of these parties. This had the effect of making the DFPE cease the attacks on the PLP, which it had carried out for five years. It now seems that some kind of working relationship may eventually be established.

The need for united action appeared swiftly indeed. A bare week after the elections government demolition crews, accompanied by large forces of police and the semi-military border guard, decended upon the Arab town of Taibeh; with in an hour, fifteen “illegal” houses were demolished. As may have been expected, this provoked large-scale riots and clashes with the police. The protest demonstrations were spear-headed by students of the local highschool; many pupils were arrested, as was the school's principal.

After two days of rioting, the Committee of Arab Mayors met in Taibeh. This committee, including the mayors of all Arab towns and villages in Israel, has been expanded to include Arab Knesset members, trade unionists, and heads of various organizations and associations. The power of this committee was demonstrated during the general strike,

which it organized on November 15, to protest the house demolitions: the overwhelming majority of Israel's Arab citizens stayed away from their jobs, kept their shops closed, and participated in a number of demonstrations and rallies to which many Jewish peace activists also came. Through the discipline maintained by the strike organisers – and the restraint showed, on this occasion, by the police – there were no violent incidents. In one case it was no more than luck: the driver of an army truck, stopping at a gas station north of Taibeh, felt threatened by a nearby group of Arab youths, even though (as he himself later admitted) they made no move to attack him; he drew his gun and started shooting wildly, only being stopped ten minutes later by a police patrol.

An explosion of violence may well have resulted, had one of the youths been hit...

The long way of the Bedouins

On October 10, 1988 the authorities carried out the demolition of the homes of three Bedouin families in the environment of Taibeh. The demolition action was reinforced by the presence of a security force of about 1000 police officers and Border Guard. There were a number of arrests.

On November 10, 1988, 15 more "illegal" houses were demolished – again with heavy semi-military police forces. There followed several days of "Intifada" in Taibeh: on television the well-known picture of armed forces, with tear gas and live ammunition, confronted by stone throwing youths. Among the destroyed houses were 7 of Bedouin families.

The Bedouin families whose houses were destroyed are part of 70 families of the Zbargeh tribe who live near the village of Taibeh in the "Triangle" area, on some 150 dunams of private land purchased by these families after their expulsion from their ancestral lands. They were among the thousands of Bedouins who – in the wake of the Camp David negotiations – had to make place for new military airports, to replace those in Sinai*. More than 100,000 dunams of Bedouin agricultural lands were expropriated in Tel El-Meleh north-east of Beersheba. From the Zbargeh tribe families now living near Taibeh, 1100 dunam were confiscated. These families have refused to accept any

compensation from the government for the loss of their lands, since the amount of the indemnification is ridiculously small.

Everywhere in Israel, Bedouins are living in fear: fear of the "Green Patrol" confiscating their animals; of the Ministry of Agriculture destroying their crops or uprooting their orchards (under laws set up specially to prevent Bedouins from engaging in agriculture); of the Ministry of Agriculture cutting off their drinking water, followed by the Interior Ministry filing a suit in court against the Bedouin who dared to build a dwelling for his family.

The Association for Support & Defence of Bedouin Rights in Israel, an organization of Bedouins, tries:

- to bring a halt to the present government policy towards Bedouins;
- to achieve full civil rights for Bedouins inside the state;
- to obtain official recognition for the "unrecognised" Bedouin villages which have existed for decades;
- to permit the establishment of modern agricultural villages – the longstanding demand of hundreds of families who have been prevented from pursuing agriculture, their ancestral source of livelihood;
- to ensure drinking water for hundreds of families;
- to cease pressures against those who refuse to relocate to the planned "concentration towns", dormitory settlements without any economic infrastructure or basis of livelihood whatsoever.

* *The Law on Acquisition of Lands (Peace-Treaty-with-Egypt) – 1980 created the possibility of quickly confiscating the lands needed – bypassing the laws which enable citizens to appeal to the courts against the expropriation of their lands.*

The Association for Support & Defence of Bedouin Rights in Israel can be contacted: P.O.B. 5212, Beersheba; tel: 057-31687

'Lessons from History'

In November 15, Amos Funkenstein, Professor of History stated at the Tel-Aviv University to an audience of 200 demonstrators – lecturers and students of the "Thus far!" group – that *Israel's treatment of the Arabs in the occupied territories is reminiscent of how the Germans treated the Jews in 1936*. This was published in the *Jerusalem Post* (16/11/88) on the front page, an honour not usually bestowed on

every speech in a demonstration of that size. The same article quoted the sociologist Dr. Moshe Shoked, the chief organizer of the event, as being not ashamed that only 200 persons had come to demonstrate – it was the day of the proclamation of Palestine – since *History will remember the few, and later thousands will claim to have worn our buttons in favour of talking to the PLO*.

On December 10, at the Tel-Aviv rally to commemorate "A Year of Intifada", writer and entertainer Dan Almagaor called for *glass cages* to be prepared for the trials of soldiers, officers and ministers who had become war criminals – an obvious allusion to the glass cage used in the Eichmann trial in 1962.

With the growing anger of many Israelis about what is done in their name, a comparison with Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews, though still making frontpage news, has apparently ceased to be "altogether, out of the question".

In October the well-known Israeli writer A.B. Yehoshua was interviewed by American magazine *Newsweek*. He was reported as saying that *seeing the response of the Israeli public to what is happening in the occupied territories today, he began to understand how the Germans could claim not to have known what happened to the Jews during World War II*.

After publication of this interview by the powerful magazine, during the election campaign's hottest month, Yehoshua came under strong attack: right-wing Knesset Members called for his expulsion from the Israeli Writers' Association, and Labor's generally calm Education Minister Navon accused him of "desecrating the memory of Holocaust victims". When interviewed in *Ha'aretz* on October 11, A.B. Yehoshua had to make himself very clear:

"I do not, by any means, compare what is taking place in the occupied territories now with the Nazi horrors. These are two completely different situations. The Holocaust was an extermination of a people out of racist motives; what we are facing now is a continuous and cruel struggle between two nations, for possession of a piece of land. I have always opposed any comparison between the situation of the Jews during the period of the Holocaust and the present situation of the Palestinians; but I cannot ignore certain psychological mechanisms which appeared then and which are also found among us today. I refer to

'The enemy's children'

Yossi Ben-Avraham is the 35 year old son of a Jewish mother – who survived Auschwitz – and an Arab father who had converted to Judaism. While his father and mother lived for the Arab village of Beit Nekofa, Yossi grew up wearing sidelocks and studying at the Porat Yosef Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

In March 1986, Ben-Avraham took a ride to the Deheishe refugee camp with a military van in charge of the delivery of mail. He wanted to bring some old clothes to a friend of his father's.

Some days later, the two soldiers who drove the van got into trouble with the military police on drug and theft charges. They involved Ben-Avraham, claiming that he had given his friend "a file on a suspected terrorist" and other secret documents, in return for \$900. One of the two was afterwards sent by a judge for psychological examination, and the other later denied in court what he had "confessed" so that his interrogators would stop beating him. Nevertheless, Yossi Ben-Avraham was arrested in June '86, on the charge of "selling secrets to the enemy", only to be released on May 5, 1987 at the end of his trial. Ben-Avraham, who is partially lame as a result of polio, says that he was chained to a wall and beaten on the head. At one point his weak arm became dislocated from his shoulder, and was pushed back into place by the interrogator after some time had passed. He was placed for long periods in a small cell where sewage covered the floor. When his case came to trial, Ben-Avraham had lost 14 kilos and had to be carried into court. His lawyer, Oded Ben-Ami, pointed out that the security forces did not indicate that any file was missing. He was acquitted and released, since the three judges of the Jerusalem District Court agreed that apparently Ben-Avraham had only given clothes to the "enemy's" children. Still he was not allowed to make things public, since the state attorney appealed against the ruling. It was another year and a half before the State dropped the appeal and lifted the veil of secrecy.

Yossi Ben-Avraham, who is left with a huge lawyers bill, is quoted as saying "I believe in this country's judicial system, but I have no faith at all in the system of investigation. There is no supervision of the interrogators. If there were, I think there would be fewer people in prison." (*Jer. Post* 23/11/88).

the psychological mechanism of the suppression of unpleasant observations, the blocking of the filters through which a human being perceives reality. I accuse not only others but also myself. All of us are beginning to get used to such things as a daily death toll of five or six in the territories, an old man being beaten to death by soldiers, horrible degradations of prisoners, a woman being put in solitary confinement for 30 days, or a quarter of a million people under curfew for many days. We have either become used to such

events, or we just don't want to know about them.

We have repeatedly asked ourselves how it is that so many people, both inside and outside Germany, did not know about the extermination of the Jews. And I am not only talking about the Germans. How is it that the Jews in Switzerland, in America, and here, in the Eretz Yisra'el community, did not know about the extermination? Was it "not knowing" or was it "ignorance"? In situations where a person feels helpless and unable to change the situation, he begins to defend himself by ignoring unpleasant facts. This psychological mechanism of self-misinformation is one of the most dangerous of the phenomena against which I tried to warn.

Q: Still, in making an analogy to the Holocaust, didn't you go too far?

A: I admit that, perhaps, I should not have made an analogy to the Germans during World War II. I could have used other examples, such as the French in Algeria, or the Dutch in Indonesia. In these cases, however, things happened in distant places and the people in France or Holland could claim, as an alibi, that they did not know about the acts of oppression committed so far away. In our case, on the other hand, we are dealing with territories ten kilometres from home.

Q: Are you surprised at the reactions in Israel to your statement?

A: I am not willing to lock up the Holocaust in a separate compartment, where people want it to be. I understand these people's sensitivity, but I am a member of a generation for whom the Holocaust had two lessons. There was the imperative "to do everything needed so that another holocaust will never again happen to us", but there was also the victims' testament, urging us to be more sensitive to injustice toward others, towards the suffering and oppression of other people. I was educated with this lesson of the holocaust – as well as with the Zionist lesson of creating a state, which would be independent and have the right to self-defence. The holocaust is in the subconscious of all of us. When we read about the Gaza Strip or see pictures from there, the comparison comes by itself. The holocaust is a starting point and a yardstick for so many of the issues in our lives. I don't think that, specifically on the point of events in the territories, we should erect an iron curtain and keep this most crucial issue out of the limits of

an analogy with the holocaust (...). Having been the victims of the holocaust does not, in any way, endow us with an eternal "carte blanche" to do whatever we want. On the contrary, the holocaust places on us the duty of being more sensitive and having a deeper feeling of justice and sensitivity to the suffering of others, including those who are not of our own people.

When Dr Jenninger, Speaker of the parliament of West Germany, at the Memorial of the "Kristallnacht" explained how an average Nazi supporter might have soothed his conscience in the first years of the Hitler regime, he was accused of 'denying the uniqueness of the holocaust', and had to resign. In several international media it was stated that although Jenninger had been very insensitive, it should be understood that he was not expressing his own thoughts, and that on the contrary he was a good friend of Israel. Lessons from history sometimes do bring about headaches.

The refugees

In the Six Day War in 1967, the most severely stricken area on the West Bank was the area of Latrun: its total population was chased away and all three villages in it – razed. One of the three villages in the area was Amwas – which is supposed to be identical with the Biblical Emmaüs. The "Association pour Réconstruire Emmaüs" is an organization of people involved with the problem of the Palestinian refugees – with special attention for those who lived in Amwas (Emmaüs).

Recently, Dr. Sami Aldeeb – president of the Association pour Réconstruire Emmaüs – wrote to us:

To the editor of The Other Israel

Our Association, about 200 members, believes that peace in the Middle East can only come through justice.

We highly appreciate your struggle for peace and justice. We would like to know what your position is concerning the refugees living in the camps in West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria? Do you have any plan for them to resolve their problem?

In fact we always read in your paper about the occupied territories, but we never read about the refugees. Have they the right to go back to their destroyed villages and to their lands? What about Emmaüs?

In our brochure, we have taken the position that recognition of Israel is not opposed, if it accepts:

- the borders prior to 1967;
- the return of those refugees who wish to, who fled in 1948 and 1967, with rights equal to those of Jewish immigrants from Moscow or New York;
- reconstruction of a significant portion of those villages destroyed, and reparations to war victims;
- dismantling of the Israeli settlements on the Occupied Territories.

What is your position? Please let us know. Thanks.

Shalom. Salam. Peace.

Sami Aldeeb

Dear Dr Sami Aldeeb

We - the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace - want a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This solution is to be achieved through peace negotiations between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories occupied in 1967 and the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Latrun area should also be included in the Palestinian state, whose government will, presumably, proceed to reconstruct the villages of Emmaüs, Beit-Nuba and Yalou which existed in this area and were destroyed in 1967.

Everything, so far, is easy for me to write, though it is not at all easy to achieve this solution in reality. There, I stand on firm moral and political ground. But answering your main question, regarding the Palestinians who became refugees in 1948, is far more difficult and painful. I will, nevertheless, try to answer it and to be as frank as I can.

I am very much aware of the fact that, in the process of being created, the state of Israel caused great harm to the Palestinian people; that the society of which I am a part has displaced and destroyed another society. The house where I live, in the Tel-Aviv suburb of Holon, is new; I don't know to whom this plot of land belonged before 1948. I do know that the university where I studied for my B.A. is located on the site of the Palestinian village Sheikh-Munis and that the headquarters of the trade union, of which I am a member, is where Sumeil village used to be. Wherever I go in Israel I encounter ruined Arab houses, or cactuses which once marked the boundary of an Arab field. When I

travel on an Israeli road, I find junctions which everybody still calls by the name of a village that disappeared forty years ago.

All Israelis are, in one way or another, aware of this - even though many try to hide the knowledge from themselves. For many, guilt feelings have turned into fear and hatred. For many an Israeli the mere thought of the refugees coming back has become a nightmare, the nightmare of himself being uprooted and becoming a homeless refugee. Many Israelis believe that peace with the Palestinians is impossible. They perceive the conflict as a savage struggle for survival, in which one side wins and the other is destroyed; therefore, they oppose making even the slightest concession to the Palestinians. It is from deep-rooted fear that the Israeli right-wing draws its power.

I have spent nearly twenty years of my life trying to convince my fellow-Israelis that we can - and must - make peace; that our government should sit down and talk with the Palestinian leadership. I think that despite all the horrors now being daily perpetrated in the occupied territories, this moment is coming nearer. When our leaders will, a last, sit and talk, there will have to be at least a basic form of justice for those who have already lived in refugee camps for forty years. But there will not be pure and complete justice. The best political solution which I believe could be achieved would mean that, in fact, only a few of the razed villages will be restored; that a limited number of the people now living in refugee camps will be allowed to live in the territory of the state of Israel, and - where this would not entail the uprooting of an existing Jewish community - on or near their original land; that the majority of the refugees will be offered citizenship of the Palestinian state, as a solution for their national problem, and monetary compensation - for their lost properties and for their decades of hardship. I realize that, in offering this solution to the Palestinians, I am asking them to make a big and painful sacrifice: to accept that the hope which they treasured for forty years was after all a dream; that the injustice which was done to them will not be undone.

Feisal Hussein stated - in the meeting with "Peace Now" which preceded his latest arrest - that, where the Palestinians' right to return is undebatable, the way in

which it should be implemented could be discussed. I am aware how much Hussein had to overcome before he could move in this direction.

If both the Israeli government and the PLO adopted this way of thinking, it would not remove all the pain and injustice of the past - but for a new generation of Israelis and Palestinians, such a compromise could mean a future without bloodshed, in which the mutual hatred could gradually dissolve.

Yours sincerely

Adam Keller

Release political prisoners!

The following petition was initiated by the International Co-ordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine. Our readers are asked to collect signatures on it and send them to P.O.B. 127, CH-1211 Genève 20, Switzerland; the signatures collected will be sent to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Mr. Prime Minister

The United Nations Fifth International Non-Government Meeting on the question of Palestine, at the end of August in Geneva, was informed about the situation of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli detention centres, and expressed its dismay at what it learned.

We must stress that the world community is alarmed by your use of such measures as mass arrests, detention without trial, and deportation, and deplores the imprisonment in hellish conditions of thousands of Palestinians. We have received eye-witness accounts of the places of detention, and are aware of the torture, appalling sanitary conditions and insufficient food and water within their confines, conditions calculated to break the prisoners in body and spirit. Likewise we are aware of and deplore the recent deaths in prison of five Palestinians including Asad Jabri Shawwa and Ibrahim a-Sumoudi, who were killed in Ansar-3 on August 16.

We regard these prisoners as political hostages. Their only crime is that their people desire freedom from the yoke of occupation. The very existence of these prisons and detention centres constitutes the collective punishment of the entire Palestinian population of the West bank and the Gaza Strip, and is an affront to international standards and human values.

We therefore call for the immediate release of all Palestinian children, women and men imprisoned by Israel since the beginning of the Intifada in December 1987, as well as all other political prisoners currently held by Israel.

It is as advocates of peace between Israel and the Palestinians that we call on you to liberate the prisoners of the Intifada forthwith. Such a gesture would receive worldwide acclamation and would mark a turning point in the disintegration of Israel's image in the eyes of world public opinion. It would also represent a significant step in the direction of peace.



Strangled society

This article was sent to us by Dr. Walid M. Awad, of the West Bank town Ramallah.

The following does not deal with "the effects of tear-gas" or "the detrimental effects of the use of live ammunition". Still it does describe some aspects of what we in the occupied territories are experiencing: the daily affairs of our people are characterized by incoherence, disarray and disorganisation.

West Bank universities have been closed down by the Israeli occupation authorities for long periods of the academic year ever since they existed; that is a rather well-known fact. During the past year all educational institutions of the occupied territories, be they universities, colleges of further education, secondary schools, preparatory and elementary schools as well as kindergartens, have been shut for the most part of the year.

The Palestinian high learning institutions came about thanks to personal initiatives of Palestinian academic entrepreneurs. If one compares the universities in the occupied territories with any of their contemporaries outside, one will discover the "deficiencies" that exist in our universities. These "deficiencies" are due to the fact that any other university in the world has its funds, budgeted with relative ease in advance by governmental institutions that take into consideration the overall educational, economic, short-term and long-term needs of that particular society. In the occupied territories we have no government, and our high learning institutions are completely dependant on funds generated by individual initiatives and donations from charitable organisations, on top of whatever tuition fees they are able to collect from students, who are in any case suffering severe hardships. Our universities are busy the whole year round trying to figure out where their next penny is coming from, therefore what the students in our universities get in terms of education, lab. equipment, properly trained teachers, and

other facilities taken for granted in any normal university - is not more than the bare minimum. While in other societies universities have their governments to count on, we have an occupation administration, that does not spare any effort to squeeze the last penny from our people.

Furthermore, the majority of the graduates of our higher learning institutions are unable to get employment in their field of study, while large numbers of high technology graduates from European universities return home only to find themselves and whatever they have learnt redundant and hardly relevant to this bereaved society.

The economic situation in the occupied territories has never been worse. The Israeli authorities utilized very cleverly the ample availability of people desperate for work then, and attracted them as a convenient source of cheap labour for their labour intensive industries, agriculture, services and building sectors. In the occupied territories there is no national banking system, nor are there financial institutions, investment companies or building societies: nothing of the kind of economic or financial institutions which usually constitute the pillars of a society. The occupation authorities prevent the establishment of any national Palestinian institution" brought about by a collective action of the Palestinian society, thus paving the way for the concerned Jewish agencies to settle the land in preparation for the actual demographic implementation of "Greater Israel".

Palestinians pay taxes, every conceivable type of tax, and more, not for the benefit of the Palestinian society but to finance the oppression, the building of settlements and infra-structures for fanatical layabout settlers. These settlers are given the opportunities to do totally unproductive works, utilising enormous amounts of funds available to them from donations by Jewish institutions in the United States and elsewhere, in addition to what they collect from us, for the purpose of reviving a biblical story they claim

happened four thousand years ago...

The taxes imposed on the Palestinians are almost in all cases "evaluated" and hardly calculated. The tax man is at liberty to add whatever percentage he finds appropriate to the tax bill on unpaid bills. Recently the financial wizards of the civil administration's tax departments embarked on new means to collect these taxes ... a cowboy look-like tax man with one gun on his right hip and a machine gun slung over his shoulder, escorted by the police and army patrols, erects barriers on the main roads. Palestinian are stopped systematically - the Palestinian cars having distinguishable number plates.

The situation of health care shows other aspects of long-term occupation effects. Mortality rates in the refugee camps are higher than anywhere else in the Middle East, ill people of all categories remain in pain as they cannot afford a doctor's visit.

Furthermore, in the occupied territories there is no social security system, nor are there any official departments whose functions are to look after the welfare of the society at large.

These are the characteristics of 21 years of occupation. Any effort by any Palestinian to work towards the salvation of his society is considered by the Israeli establishment to be a threat to the state of Israel, thus justifying to the Israeli public the immoral actions and practices used against the Palestinians under occupation. In fact this sentiment is a myth, as we Palestinians have said unequivocally time and time again that we are willing to recognize the state of Israel in the pre-'67 borders, and that the current Palestinian uprising is solely directed towards ending the occupation, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state which will endeavour to live in peace with its neighbours - including first, and foremost, the state of Israel. The PLO's raison d'être is not the undoing of Israel but the salvation of the Palestinian people.

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