

The Other Israel

Newsletter of the Israeli Council
for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

April-May 1989 No 36

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INDIRECT NEGOTIATIONS

For once, Shimon Peres can be credited with an astute political observation. Upon Prime Minister Shamir's return from Washington, the Labor Party leader remarked: "The indirect negotiations with the PLO have started." Even before Shamir arrived in Washington, his hosts made clear their wish to hear from him some "new ideas". Shamir did voice one somewhat new idea – the idea of holding elections in the Occupied Territories. (This proposal originated with Labor Defence Minister Rabin, who is fast becoming Shamir's main political ally.)

The elections idea was found acceptable in the White House, and predictions of a Shamir-Bush confrontation did not materialise. Also, it sold quite well in the American media; to a western audience, the word "elections" has a nice, liberal sound, and it also gave Shamir something to tell the American Jewish community – a community which is becoming more and more critical and rebellious, despite the carefully stage-managed "Prime Minister's Jewish Solidarity Conference", held in Jerusalem on the eve of Shamir's departure.

However, Shamir had to pay a price for all this. President Bush set out the new rules of the game by calling upon Israelis and Palestinians to achieve a "mutually accepted method" for holding "properly designed" elections. Thus, the PLO was officially set out as an equal partner to Israel in achieving an agreement, with American mediation.

Upon returning to Israel, Shamir issued several "clarifications" to his plan: *Of course the Arabs in East Jerusalem will not be allowed to vote in these elections; Jerusalem in its entirety is the capital of Israel (...)* We

will not allow the Palestinian leaders who will be elected to move out of the track which will be defined for them. We will not allow them to work for a Palestinian state..

These statements were clearly designed with the double purpose of mollifying Shamir's opponents in the right-wing of his own Likud Party, and of provoking the Palestinians into rejecting the whole idea out of hand, allowing Shamir to win propaganda points. However, things did not go that easy. The PLO did, indeed, forcefully reject the Shamir-Rabin concept of "elections under occupation", but at the same time presented its own concept of elections. The original Palestinian position called for the withdrawal of the Israeli army and its replacement by international troops, prior to any elections – in a way similar to the Namibian agreement. However, this seems to be but a starting position for negotiations.

A reasonable formula for elections might include such elements as a partial Israeli withdrawal, evacuating towns and population centers while remaining in some strategic areas; international monitoring, both during the campaigning and on the polling day itself; international guarantees for the immunity of the elected Palestinian representatives from detention or deportation, and for their complete freedom of movement, inside and outside the Territories; and a clear timetable linking up "the interim agreement" (elections) with "the definite settlement" (Palestinian independence) plus guarantees for the PLO's direct participation in the latter.

As a result of an agreement along these lines, the organs of a de-facto Palestinian state, already formed

underground by the Intifada, would be able to surface and work freely, though their transformation into a fully sovereign state would take some more time. Yasser Arafat should have a good chance to get the support of the main Palestinian factions, and to create a Palestinian consensus, both in the Territories and outside, for such an agreement.

On the Israeli side Yitzchak Shamir – if he could be brought to agree to such terms – could rely on the support of the Labor Party to overcome the probable opposition of Sharon and other Likud super-hawks. That, however, is a very big "if". In order to make Shamir accept the holding of elections under conditions even remotely acceptable to the Palestinians, American diplomacy would need to make a strenuous effort; also needed is greater Soviet involvement in the mediation, a possibility foreshadowed by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's Middle East tour in February.

A factor making the two super-powers' efforts more urgent is the outbreak of serious riots in Jordan, after a year and half in which King Hussein succeeded in insulating his kingdom from the Intifada. To forestall the prospect of smaller and bigger Intifadas breaking out all over the Middle East, American and Soviet diplomats might hasten to reach a settlement.

Meanwhile, the bloodshed continues, and seems likely to continue for a long time yet. For many youths, alive and hale at this moment, the agreement will come too late.

The editor

Widening dialogue

Since it started publication, *The Other Israel* strove to chronicle in detail all instances of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, and in particular, meetings of Israelis with PLO representatives. Due to *force majeure* we are no longer able to do so within the framework of these tiny pages. The situation of the last months was pictured in quite an amusing way by Israeli journalist Lily Galili, who reported on the adventurous life of today's Ratz Knesset Members (quoted from *Ha'aretz*, 28.2.89).

Take, for example, Knesset member Dedi Zucker. Last Thursday he took off for Oxford. There he met with Basam Abu-Sharif, the same Abu-Sharif who previously participated in the Paris meeting with Shulamit Aloni and who also met Ran Cohen in The Hague.

One day before setting out for Britain, K.M. Tzucker participated in a public meeting with Feisal Hussein, in Jerusalem. In the midst of his speech, Hussein was suddenly struck by a total blackout; he stopped speaking and his face turned red. A frightened silence spread in the hall. After a minute, Hussein recovered, and said in an embarrassed tone: "I am sorry, I am just very tired." No wonder! On the previous days, Hussein participated in two public meetings of "Down with the Occupation", one in Jerusalem and the other - in Tel-Aviv; from there, he hurried back to Jerusalem to be in time for the conference organised by "The Center for Peace". There, it was possible for him to meet with Prof. Galya Golan (who was also in The Hague) and with Moshe Amirav, who will soon go to New York, where he will meet Prof. Edward Said and Basam Abu-Sharif, at a conference organised by *New Outlook* and *Al-Fajr* newspapers.

Of course, Ratz is not the only newly arrived participant in dialogue with the PLO (though it may have the best contacts in the Israeli media). Mapam, too, "stuck out its

neck" and sent K.M. Yair Tzaban to the Paris' meeting and Meir Pa'il to the one in The Hague. Peace Now also has its representatives everywhere; former Likud dissident Moshe Amirav has involved his new party Shinuy; and there are the problematic Labor doves... Thus, the dialogue scene has become very crowded. From the reports of ICIPP members - such as Matti Peled in New York (see article) and Yossi Amitay in The Hague - it becomes clear that there are some frictions between "new" and "old" Israelis involved in such dialogue. The "oldtimers" seem to be happier to find new people among themselves than vice versa.

PLO screened in

A conference organised in Jerusalem by "The International Center for Peace", brought together Israelis, Palestinians, Diaspora Jews and Soviets, and succeeded even to have PLO participation ... through a video cassette, showing Abu-Iyad with a special message to the gathering:

After decades of struggle and suffering, we have reached a realistic approach: this land belongs to the two peoples and both of them have a national right to live in it. The only solution to the conflict is dividing the land into two states, which will exist side by side, in a relationship of peace and cooperation. Problems cannot be solved by force. We must end the bloodshed and the killing of women and children on both sides. We are willing to talk; there is no problem we would refuse to discuss.

Quoted from Ha'ir, 3.3.89.

The wider extension of the dialogue does give rise to new problems. The participants willy-nilly find out about each other's sensitive points. Israelis are confronted with the real impact of the refugee question. Palestinians face Israelis whose nationalistic feelings are hurt more easily than those of the ones they met before. On both sides, the "old dialogue fanatics" form a "fire-brigade".

In The Hague, Basam Abu Sharif decided - when the flames were blazing up high - to apologise for the use of vocabulary referring to Nazi concentration camps, when speaking of Ansar-3. The term "final solution" - referring to PLO acceptance of a two-state solution as a definite settlement of the conflict - had, also, to be banished. In short: it is not always easy, but, for sure, extremely useful as a preparation for the real negotiations with the Israeli government. Moreover, progress is made: On February 7, *Ha'aretz* reported that Knesset Member Ran Cohen and PLO London representative Feisal Ubeida found no ground for disagreement, during their joint public appearance at Hampstead - striking news, indeed, for those who know Cohen for years.

More than anything else, the participation of Abba Eban at the Hague meeting served to legitimise contacts with the PLO. For Israelis - and, not to be forgotten, for Israel-supporters abroad, Jewish as well as non-Jewish - Eban is the incarnation of respectability. Having served four decades as one of the Israeli establishment's main speakers, whether as Ambassador to the U.N., Foreign Minister or Knesset Member, Eban's words and actions are taken quite seriously, even when he is now a private citizen. A rather ludicrous incident showed this: upon arrival in Holland, Eban - still feeling quite at home in the Israeli embassy - called upon the ambassador and arranged for himself an embassy dinner to which Dutch VIPs would also be invited. However, the Likud-controlled Foreign Ministry, in a fit of petty-mindedness, cancelled the dinner. Back in Israel, Eban told the whole story on television. Thereupon, for a whole week politicians and newspaper

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editorials debated the question whether Eban, once having met with the PLO, still deserves the honor of an embassy dinner. Quite a lot felt that he does.

The Israeli-Palestinian dialogue has, by now, exhausted practically all potential candidates for participation from among opposition parties and organizations. There remains, however, a vital next step to be performed – involving members of the ruling parties, as a prelude to official peace negotiations. So far, only a few prominent Laborites have taken part in meetings with the PLO – notably Abba Eban, who in the last elections was excluded from the Labor Party's list of parliamentary candidates and thus has little to lose by flouting party discipline; Chaim Tzadok, former Minister of Justice, who also holds no present party position and relies on his extensive informal connections; and K.M. Aryeh Eliav, who had participated in meetings with the PLO since 1975, as a founding member of the ICIPP (at that time, he was not in Labor).

Other Labor doves continue to hold back. K.M. Ora Namir, who intended to participate in the Paris meeting, turned back at the last moment; the young K.M. Abraham Burg rejected several offers to participate in such meetings, since he would not be able to go there with an official mandate of the party. Fearing to be accused of breaking the law, the doves contented themselves with less bold steps. Many of them participated in a conference held at Lausanne, where the organisers took care to invite only Palestinians who – though supporting the PLO – do not have an official function in it. There is also a noticeable and much-publicised presence of Labor doves in meetings with Palestinians from the Occupied Territories.

Special attention was given to Feisal Hussein, who spent the first weeks after his release from prison in an endless round of meetings. Most publicised was the mid-February meeting of Labor Knesset Members, headed by Deputy Finance Minister Yossi Beilin, with a group of important Palestinian activists, who were put in contact with the Laborites by Feisal Hussein. The meeting aroused anger in the Likud and among Labor hawks, but Shimon Peres gave full backing to Beilin, his close confidant, and the subsequent heated Knesset debate ended in a draw. A week later, however, (Labor) Defense Minister Rabin fought back:

one of the participants in the meeting with Beilin, the journalist Sam'an Khouri – of the French press Agency – was placed under Administrative Detention. A month later, it was announced that Khouri would be prosecuted on charges of being a member of the Intifada's United Leadership. This step – like the detentions of Feisal Hussein – was clearly intended to sabotage the meetings with the Labor doves and discredit them in the eyes of the Palestinians.

Moving closer to Beilin and the doves, Shimon Peres started making statements hinting at his approaching acceptance of the idea of a Palestinian state. Rabin, Peres' old rival, is keeping a low profile and does not openly challenge Peres' leadership of the party. A more open, though less serious, challenge was, however, issued by Ministers Mordechai ("Mota") Gur and Moshe Shachal. Earlier, the two of them displayed dovish postures and made statements in favor of negotiations with the PLO; now, however, they have shifted their ground, took hawkish stands and blamed Labor's defeat in the February municipal elections on Peres' dovishness. While beset by internal party struggles, Peres contemplated a drastic move: in mid-March, he authorised Yisrael Gat, Labor's Foreign Relations Secretary, to participate in a delegation of the Socialist International which met Arafat in Tunis. However, a few hours before Gat was due to board the plane in Vienna, Peres changed his mind and recalled him to Israel. Peres claimed that he had not known that Gat was going to meet Arafat personally, and had stopped him upon learning of it. Gat, however, claims that Peres had known about it several days in advance. For the moment things in the Labor Party seem to be at an impasse.

Meanwhile, various rumors circulate about going-ons in the nationalist Likud party, where the expulsion of Moshe Amirav (*issue 30, p.11*) did not, apparently, put an end to the emergence of a "moderate" wing. Amirav still maintains some contacts in the Likud; members of the Likud council met with him and asked for details about his recent meetings with PLO officials. On another occasion a group of Likud members, headed by former Dimona Mayor, Eli Halali, turned up at a Tel-Aviv meeting of the International Center for Peace, declaring their support

for its aims – which now include peace with the PLO. Meanwhile, it was officially disclosed that Amirav's meetings with Feisal Hussein, in 1987, were conducted with the knowledge of Prime Minister Shamir, as well as of several of Shamir's young protégés, two of whom are included in the present cabinet: Justice Minister Dan Meridor, and Arab Affairs Minister Ehud Olmert. Olmert told to *Hadashot* (March 24, '89) that he already rejected several invitations to participate in meetings with senior PLO officials. A week before, however, on March 16, the political journalist Dan Margalit, known to have excellent connections in the corridors of power – wrote in *Ha'aretz* that at least four Likud Ministers consider the idea of talking to the PLO, and are busy debating the conditions for such negotiations. According to Margalit, when Ariel Sharon reprimanded them, he got the answer: *If you would be the Prime Minister, you would be the first to embrace Arafat!*

New York Conference

by Matti Peled

The "Road to Peace" Conference at Columbia University (11-13 March 1989), organised by *New Outlook* and *Al-Fajr* newspapers, was an interesting experiment in establishing a format for dialogue between widening circles of peace seeking groups of Israelis and Palestinians.

The fact that the Palestinians, through the PLO, were able to present an official peace policy – based on the recent PNC resolutions – while the Israelis represented the opposition to their government's anti-peace policy, created an a-symmetrical situation which at moments resulted in a degree of tension. It was clear that, for a number of Israeli participants, the situation was nerve-wrecking both on account of their indecision with regards to the infamous anti-peace law, which forbids such encounters, and because they felt uncomfortable joining the Palestinians in openly criticising the Israeli government. From time to time, Israeli speakers felt the need to please the public at home by becoming unnecessarily abnoxious. When one of the Palestinians named Elmer Berger and Noam Chomsky, among Jews who recognized very early the existence of a Palestinian people, there was a protest from (some of) the Israelis against "mentioning anti-

Zionist Jews". Similarly, a number of Israelis felt obliged to demand that the PLO stop military activities against Israeli armed forces *even* in Lebanon, in spite of the fact that in Lebanon Israeli military actions against Palestinians are being carried out regularly with tragic consequences such as bombing a school and killing or wounding school children. A real outburst took place on the morning of the last day of the conference, because on the previous evening, during the "Cultural Program", a Palestinian singer sang the equivalent of what is called in Hebrew "Home-land Songs" (Shirey Moledet), which caused some Israelis to feel offended.

However, the result of regularly having similar meetings will be that both parties learn to respect the other's sensitivities and, gradually, a common vocabulary will evolve which makes for smoother communication and the disappearance of "symptoms of nervousness".

A doubtful contribution to the conference was the tendency of Yossi Sarid and others to set a linkage between elections in the occupied territories and the ending of the Intifada, thereby echoing the positions of Shamir and Rabin. Due to lack of time this suggestion did not come to full discussion, and it is to be hoped that, by the time of the next conference, this folly will be forgotten.

A threat of serious conflict appeared on the last moment of the conference. Without consulting the other Israeli participants (who in any case did not constitute a formal "delegation") Sarid stated that "no one in the Israeli Delegation would recognize the Palestinians' right of return", and that "the opposition to this right unifies all Israelis from Shamir to Sarid".

The Palestinians, who wanted very much to let the conference end in a friendly tone, showed restraint; they saw no point in "negotiating with a group of Israelis who had no mandate to represent Israel". Nabil Shaath and several other Palestinians made statements in reply to Yossi Sarid's declaration. They all clarified that the PLO had no intention to inundate Israel with returning refugees, but that the ways to deal with the three million Palestinian refugees will have to be discussed at the peace conference on the basis of UN resolutions, which indicate several possible approaches to the problem.

There is no doubt that the conference was important as a step toward

widening the circle of Israelis who come to meet and get to know the Palestinian leadership. In this respect the informal parts of the conference were especially relevant. It also enabled the Palestinians to get a better idea of the Israeli peace groups, their sensitivities and peculiarities. So it is to be hoped that the organizing committee of this conference will have the means and energy to go on organizing other ones.

Meetings on the ground

The extension of dialogue with the PLO abroad, is matched by an enormous rise in the number of meetings of Israelis with Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. Palestinians have become frequent speakers at rallies and meetings in Israel, and Israelis speak to Palestinian audiences - especially in East Jerusalem, which is about the only place where Palestinians are sometimes allowed to hold peaceful political gatherings. Also, the number of solidarity visits of Israelis, with or without connection to particular events, has substantially increased. Walls are broken down, not only among Israelis and Palestinians, but also among different groups on each side - as on February 17, when a delegation visiting the Dheishe refugee camp held the unlikely combination of members from the Israeli Communist and Labor parties...

Inevitably, with so many initiatives being undertaken, some encounter difficulties and failures. Thus, a large group of Israelis, headed by Mapam K.M. Chaim Oron, set out to visit the long-suffering Beita village. They were invited by a local group of activists, and these received them warmly; however, the local members of the Islamic Hamas Movement, who were not involved in inviting the Israelis, regarded them with suspicion ("whenever Jews come, the army follows"). The two Palestinian groups confronted each other, and their debate seemed about to develop into a quarrel; rather than be the cause of that, the Israelis left the village.

In contrast to such failures stand some notable successes. At Beit-Sahur some 50 members of the "Israelis by Choice" group of new immigrants* spent a whole weekend, staying as guests with local families and participating in several large

public meetings. They succeeded in outwitting the military patrols, so that only after 24 hours did the military governor learn of the presence of the Israeli "subversives"...

In the "Peace Day", organised by the Peace Now movement on March 4, Israeli-Palestinian meetings were organised on a far larger scale than ever before. Hundreds upon hundreds of Israelis set out, in buses and private cars, to different parts of the West Bank. The Intifada leadership issued a special proclamation, calling upon the population to welcome these Israelis. The army was less friendly; most of the peace demonstrators were stopped at army roadblocks on the entrances to the West Bank. Even there, however, they were enthusiastically greeted by the drivers of numerous Arab cars, which were stopped by the same roadblocks.

* *Israelis by Choice*, P.O.B. 4319, Jerusalem 91042

Military predicaments

The rise in the number of soldiers refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories is a source of constant concern for Israel's military and civilian authorities. At the end of 1988, an attempt was made to isolate the refusers by de-legitimising their support organization, Yesh Gvul - with the intention of eventually outlawing it altogether. However, this attempt backfired. Far from discrediting Yesh Gvul, the intensive police investigation of its members resulted in a wave of public sympathy and solidarity, making its positions more widely accepted than ever in the Israeli public (*see previous issue, p.10*). In February 1989, the investigation was terminated.

Another attempt started in 1988 came to much the same end: the case of reserve lieutenant-colonel Dov Yirmiyah. Yirmiyah, a veteran of all Israeli wars, spoke at a rally in Haifa and called upon soldiers to refuse service in the Occupied Territories. Interrogated by the police, he admitted the charge of "inciting soldiers to disobey orders" and told his investigators that he would welcome a trial. He declared that, in such a trial, the true defendant would not be himself but the occupation. Several months later -

presumably after the implications of the prospective trial were considered – the police closed the case of this “self-confessed criminal” on grounds of ... lack of evidence.

In February and March, the military authorities started to implement a new policy, aimed at dividing and weakening the refusing soldiers' struggle. In hundreds of cases, refusers were not imprisoned, but offered a variety of “deals”. In some cases, they were sent to duties in the Occupied Territories, which do not involve direct contact with the Palestinian population; others were allowed to serve within Israel's pre-'67 borders; still others were sent home, or offered temporary or permanent discharge from the army on medical or psychiatric grounds. In all these cases, the military authorities attempted to avoid publicity, to obscure the political aspects and play down the whole issue as “personal problems of certain individuals”.

However, with the growing number of refusers, these “deals” have become such a massive phenomenon that they became an interesting item in themselves for several papers. According to *Ha'aretz* (April 2), senior military officers who denied that the army command is encouraging units to make such “deals” with refusers, were unable to explain why such deals have become so numerous; the army's personnel section described the refusers as “a marginal and negligible phenomenon” – at the same time threatening refusers with dire punishment.

Indeed, simultaneously with the large-scale offering of “deals”, the military authorities have singled out a number of refusers for particularly severe treatment. An arbitrarily chosen soldier was made an example of: 33-year old Rami Chasson of Jerusalem. Chasson, who had never been particularly active politically, refused in April 1988 to participate in putting down the Intifada and served a 28-day prison term. Before the end of the same year he was called again and ordered to serve as a guard in the Fara'a prison, notorious for cases of mistreatment and torture of Palestinian youths. Upon his refusal, Chasson was sentenced to another 28 days. Since that time, this reservist again and again received upon his release a new, similar order; he has been going in and out of jail, now serving his fifth consecutive prison term. The few days of freedom,

in between, he spent sitting in front of Prime Minister Shamir's home, holding in his hands a big photograph of a three-year old Palestinian girl, who lost her left eye from a “rubber” bullet shot by an Israeli soldier.

All of Chasson's trials were conducted by his commanding officer, rather than before a regular court-martial. In a trial by a commanding officer the accused is not allowed to be represented by a lawyer, and the trial is held in camera; such trials, in fact, seldom last more than five or ten minutes. On the other hand, the commanding officer is limited to imposing no more than 28 days of imprisonment, in comparison with the far longer terms in a court-martial's authority. However, as Chasson's case shows, this limitation can be circumvented. In theory there is nothing to prevent the army from putting a person in prison again and again for the rest of his life, without ever allowing him any legal assistance, or a possibility of appeal; only protests and public pressure provide a counterforce. In this last aspect the Chasson case is moving forward. It is already getting wide and sympathetic media-coverage. On April 9, several papers published the picture of Rami Chasson presenting himself at the prison gate for another term.

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On April 22, in the middle of the Pesach week, hundreds of Yesh Gvul supporters gathered at that same gate, and proceeded to climb a mountain overlooking the prison. On the mountain side, from where loudspeakers could reach to Chasson and the five other imprisoned refusers, they held a Pesach ceremony; Pesach is the holiday of the Exodus from Egypt, and the liberation from slavery – the time of freeing captives and prisoners.

Letters of encouragement: *To Samal Rishon (senior sergeant) Rami Chasson, personal number 2245495 (reservist prisoner), military prison six, military postal code 03734, Israeli Defence Forces, Israel.*

Contact: *Yesh G'vul, P.O.Box 6953, Jerusalem 91068; or: P.O.Box 4172, Tel-Aviv 61041, or: American Friends of Yesh G'vul, 1678 Shattuck Ave., P.O.Box 6, Berkeley, CA 94709, U.S.A.; or: British Friends of Yesh G'vul, c/o 6 Endsleigh St., London WC1, U.K.*

42-year old Carlos Levinhof came to Israel from Uruguay, after his father-in-law was tortured to death by the military dictatorship. In Israel, he and his family continued the struggle for human rights.

In February 1989 he was ordered to do reserve service on the West Bank. His refusal brought him 35 days in prison. A few days after his release, his son Amit – a conscript and founding member of the “High-school Students' Group” – was imprisoned in turn. (see box).

Meanwhile, Irene Levinhof – Carlos' wife – went to Athens, where she was supposed to address an international conference of jurists, convened to discuss the Intifada. The Libyan delegation, however, put a veto on the participation of a Jewish Israeli, and this was upheld by the organisers, despite strong protests – especially from the Palestinian and the Greek participants.

For many years, the moderate left-wing parties, Mapam and Ratz, have strongly opposed the idea of soldiers' refusal to serve in the Occupied Territories. This position is sometimes justified by the argument that conscientious soldiers, by being present “on the spot”, could – if not ameliorate the Palestinians' situation, perhaps prevent some of the worst abuses, or at least testify about what they saw.

An objection to refusal is also voiced on grounds of principle: that citizens in a democratic state are bound to obey the orders of a legally-elected government, even if they voted for the opposition; that non-acceptance of the army as a framework for all would lead to the society's disintegration into a multitude of factions maintaining private armies.

These established positions are subjected to growing strains since the beginning of the Intifada. The Mapam-affiliated kibbutz movement traditionally supported the Israeli army – in whose creation, in 1948, kibbutzniks played a central role; kibbutz youths have been encouraged to volunteer for elite combat units and undertake officers' training. On

the other hand, humanistic values like "the brotherhood of all peoples" are part of this same kibbutz ideology, and are instilled in the youth. These two elements were held together by the assumption that the army's role is strictly defensive, that the state of Israel seeks peace and all use of violence is forced upon it by Arab intransigence. However, kibbutz members – conscripts and reservists – who serve in the Occupied Territories find this harder and harder to believe: on Friday evenings, when the soldiers arrive home for weekend leave, shocking stories are told in kibbutz communal mess-halls, and heated debates break out. Now and then there is mention in the media of a kibbutz member imprisoned for refusal (*see sep. art. "Kibbutz discords"*).

So far, the Mapam leadership has remained totally opposed to the refusers. While sponsoring the publication of soldiers' and officers' testimonies on acts of repression, Mapam's Knesset members are at the same time actively campaigning in the kibbutzim and calling upon the youths to continue obeying the orders of their commanding officers.

Until recently, the Ratz leadership took a similar position. Ratz Knesset Members were also active in propaganda against refusal. According to his own public statements, Yossi Sarid went as far as visiting army units, at their commanding officers' request, in order to dissuade soldiers who considered refusal. In the last six months Ratz, however, did start to modify its positions. In the 1988 elections Prof. Adi Ophir was put on a low place in the Ratz list of parliamentary candidates, a bare three months after his release from military prison. This move remained ambiguous, however, as the party's official position, continued its opposition to the disobedience of soldiers. The only two parties supporting it were The Progressive List – with former general Matti Peled voicing from the Knesset floor a call for soldiers to disobey immoral orders – and the Communists.

After the elections, discontent with the party line grew in the Ratz Youth Movement. In mid-February the youths organised a public debate with Yesh Gvul speakers, on refusal to serve in the Territories. The day was such a success that it got a follow-up in the beginning of March. Since then the refuseniks have found an ally on Ratz's highest level: in an interview in Ha'aretz of March 10,

Ratz General Secretary Shulamit Aloni makes clear that she totally changed her viewpoint.

Until recently I believed that the rule of law is working, and that – if something does go wrong – the parliamentary and public activities of myself and my colleagues are enough to put a stop to it. However, I have become conscious that "the rule of law" has turned into a myth, a cover-up for injustice. I, too have a share in creating the myth that whatever is legal, is "okay".

When a Knesset majority approved Rabin's oppressive policies (...) it acted out of majority despotism. (...) Some laws are "illegal" in terms of universal law. The colonels' junta in Argentina ruled according to a law. (...) If the laws of the Territories were not our laws, we would have justified the refusal to obey them, we would have supported rebellion. We are educating our youth on the example of Jeremiah, Martin Luther King and Ghandi. What should they think when they are told to arrest a man, beat him and break his bones, and that all this is legal?...

..age..

Last Tuesday, the fourth of April, our comrade Amit Levinhof was tried and sentenced to 28 days of imprisonment. Like us, Amit has refused to participate in the continuation of occupation and oppression and to commit the so-called "excesses" which are in fact a norm. Amit is not ready to break into a house at night and beat up youths of his own age, nor is he willing to shoot at civilians lead, rubber or plastic bullets. Amit is conducting a struggle of conscience. His refusal to be an oppressor is his only crime. We demand his immediate release! *Signatories of The Highschool Letter, P.O.Box 33847, Tel-Aviv 61338*

On April 10, copies of the above statement were distributed, by highschool students facing conscription in the near future, to soldiers going in and out the Defence Ministry gate. The Highschool Letter, pledging refusal to participate in the oppression of the Palestinian people, now has 204 signatories. Forty of them were so far conscripted, five of whom have actually been sent to the occupied territories – and ended up in prison.

(...) If a conscript will come to me for advice, I will do everything to make clear to him that he is causing himself much trouble. I would have doubts

whether such a young boy could be fully aware of what he is taking upon himself by refusing to serve in the Territories. But if I will become convinced that he realizes the full implications for himself, and that he will go to prison in full awareness (...) then I will regard him as great and courageous; I will approve of his decision, regard it as justified and publicly defend him.

Aloni, however, makes clear in the same interview that – despite her appreciation of the individual refuser's moral courage – she does not regard refusal as an adequate political approach, and therefore does not support refusers' organizations such as Yesh Gvul – whose members are invited, instead, to support (and join) Ratz.

For Israeli families the appearance in their postbox of a brown envelope, bearing military postal marks and containing a call-up order for military reserve service, is quite a regular phenomenon. It means that one of the male members of the family has to put himself at the army's disposal for the next month or two.

At the end of March, 1989, similar brown envelopes arrived at many a house in Israel; the paper inside, though similar to the standard military form, had a different content. It called upon reservists to add one more day to the many, in order to fulfill a different kind of service: "not to defend borders against outside enemies, but to defend our army against decision-makers who are pulling it down – turning it into an army of oppression to the detriment of its preparedness for its true challenges". The service required was participation in a rally, to be held at the Defence Ministry gates, organised by the movement "Tzav Kriah" ("Call-up Order").

Most of the speakers at the rally, held on April 4, were reserve officers who never before participated in political activity, and voiced burning personal statements (*see box*). More than 100 people participated – practically all of them men, which is quite an exception in peace activities. More than half were not familiar to the regular picketers of the Defence Ministry's gate. The reserve soldiers present signed a petition, directed at the Israeli government, concluding:

We are living in an impossible conflict between our concern for the security of the state and the soldiers.

The following excerpt from the speech of Major (res.) Yossi Dantziger, commander of a reserve infantry company, was delivered at the Tzav Kriah rally, and is translated from Zu HaDerech (April 12, 1989). A part of this speech was broadcast on the television news of April 4.

This year I did seventy-two days' service in the Territories, most of them spent fighting children. I did not refuse the call-up order. None of my soldiers did - I convinced them not to refuse. Nor will I disobey the next call-ups. I am gnashing my teeth and continuing to serve. This is not just a figure of speech - my front teeth were broken by an Intifada stone, on the Jewish people's front line in Rafah.

Israel's political and military leadership is leading us into a dead end. The soldiers know what is happening on the ground. They know it far better than our sleepy Prime Minister. They are losing confidence, both in the political leadership and in their commanding officers.

I was brought up upon Jewish history. I was told that, after the Second World War, Jewish life will never again be defenceless. Today, this argument is still in use. Having commanded a company which restored order in the Territories, I can tell you that today it is Arab life which is defenceless. They tell us that all the women, children and old people who were killed, died because there was no other way. That is not true. Our leaders give moral legitimacy to the killing of Arabs; they create a situation where any trigger-happy psychopath can kill Arabs in the Territories, knowing that the system will cover up for him. The army could maintain the struggle in the Territories at a far lower cost in human life; but what is really necessary is just to get out of this quagmire. I call upon the government: For the sake of Israel's security, get out of the Territories! Let the Palestinians determine their own fate. Stop playing tricks, stop inventing a non-existent "Palestinian leadership". Sit down and talk with the true leadership, with the PLO, with Arafat, and if need be with Saladin's ghost in person!

and our understanding of the Arab inhabitants' aspirations. (...). We were strong enough to fight in all wars. You, our government, must now be strong enough to sit down in peace

negotiations. You can then rely on our strength to support you.

Contact: Tzav Kriah, P.O.Box 9591, Jerusalem 49019; or: P.O.Box 4797, Haifa 31040.

On March 9, Ha'aretz reported about spreading agitation among the soldiers of a reserve battalion, who already served a total of 115 days since the beginning of the Intifada; now, they were called up again for a further month's tour of duty. Yuval Lifschitz, the soldiers' unofficial spokesman, said that many of the soldiers of this battalion are about to lose their jobs, after such prolonged and frequent absences, while those who have their own business are in danger of bankruptcy. The soldiers met with a senior officer, but got no satisfactory answer to their grievances, and a demonstration by the whole battalion was planned.

Nothing further was heard of this plan. The army, however, did announce new measures for "a more equitable division of burdens among reserve units". It seems that some kind of unpublicised deal was made with the soldiers of the disaffected battalion.

Kibbutz discords

Yohanan Margalit - a 42-years old reservist - served in March 1989 a prison term for refusal to go to Bethlehem. His case divided the usually quiet Mapam kibbutz Ma'anit, of which he is a member, into two camps. As described by his wife (*quoted in a long and sympathetic article in the generally conservative paper Ma'ariv March 24*), many of his supporters were from among the kibbutz founders - themselves a generation of revolutionaries. The kibbutz women, too, expressed support and understanding. Among the youngsters, however, were those who felt that he deserves longer imprisonment.

On the night of February 20, police arrested three members of kibbutz K'ramim, caught while painting slogans in support of the Intifada on the walls of Be'er Sheba buildings. On receipt of the news, the kibbutz secretariat hurried to make a statement to the press, condemning the act of "smearing" graffiti and

dissociating themselves from part of the graffiti's content. The secretariat's performance, in turn, was not welcomed by all members of the kibbutz and gave rise to some more commotion.

A deeper controversy is splitting another kibbutz, Kadarim - affiliated with Mapam. Like Ma'anit and K'ramim. Founded less than ten years ago, Kadarim is a small kibbutz with only 36 members. Having little agricultural land, their livelihood depends mainly on a factory, producing spare parts for army jeeps and cars. In March 1989, the members found out that the factory was about to sign a contract for covering lead bullets with a layer of rubber, producing the so-called "rubber-bullets" for use in the Occupied Territories. Since then, the kibbutz has been split into two camps. The factory managers and their followers claimed that the contract is vital to the factory's - and, hence, the kibbutz's - economic survival, and that, in any case, "a rubber bullet is more humane than a lead one". The opponents countered by hanging, on the messhall billboard, photographs of Palestinian children mutilated by the "humane" bullets. In a tense meeting of the kibbutz general assembly they stated that the kibbutz's survival cannot be purchased at the expense of the ideals for which it was founded.

The kibbutz's economic coordinator was not at all enthusiastic about the media's interest, complaining that "Defence Ministry contractors are legally forbidden to disclose any details on what they produce; the things discussed at the general assembly were pure hypothetical possibilities and general principles of the relations between the factory and the kibbutz (*Hadashot* 14.4.89).

It is difficult to decide whether the coordinator made an effort to save the "reliability" of Kadarim towards the Defence Ministry, or whether the ministry already renounced the contract.

We ask our readers to answer the following questionnaire:

1. I have problems in reading the smaller letters in *The Other Israel*: Yes/No

2. I prefer to have less information, and no more small letters: Yes/No

Please send us your answer, even when it is twice: 'No'.

Chronicle

Rayna Moss and Adam Keller

During the Lebanon War, one of the most important of the protest movements was "Parents Against Silence". Its demonstrations attracted special attention, due to the moral authority traditionally accorded in Israel to soldiers' parents. After the government announcement of withdrawal from Lebanon, in June 1985, the group disbanded itself. This uncritical acceptance helped the government to obscure the fact that the Israeli army remains in occupation of a part of South Lebanon, the so-called "Security Zone".

At the beginning of 1989, the organization was re-established. The following is excerpted from the statement signed by its 16 member re-founding committee:

(...) We have come back to demonstrate at the Defence Ministry gates. Again, we cannot remain silent. The children and boys who are beaten, wounded and killed are not our sons; but it is our sons who are forced to beat and kill; and our sons, too, are wounded and hurt. We cannot stand the humiliation and pain of either.

We have again started to demonstrate (...) because what Rabin calls "riots" and "restoring order" is, in fact, a situation of violent occupation which is fast becoming a new war, a war of our own choosing, which was not imposed upon us. Today, there is another choice - there is a partner for peace negotiations. We regard Rabin's political plan (*elections in the Territories*) as a ray of hope. We call upon (him) to show courage and start a dialogue with any recognised, Palestinian leadership which would renounce violence - including the PLO (published in *Ha'aretz*, 16/2/89).

February 25, Women For Political Prisoners (WOFPP) held a picket in front of the "Russian Compound" detention center in Jerusalem in protest of the harsh conditions and collective punishment of Palestinian women detained there.

The picket was fully legal and the women acted in accordance with police directives not to stand close to the detainees' visiting families. In spite of this, they were informed that the picket was "illegal" and ordered to disperse; when they refused, on the grounds that they were fully in their rights, six of them were arrested. When they continued to insist on their legal rights, in refusing to give

the police any information beyond that which appears on their ID cards, they were threatened with overnight detention. However, they were released that evening, after signing for bail of NIS 3000 each.

This was the start of a police campaign of intimidation. The police made arrests at the activities of various organizations such as "Yesh Gvul", "Stop the Occupation", and an ad-hoc group distributing English-language leaflets at the entrance to the government-sponsored "Jewish Solidarity Conference". The "more respectable" Peace Now, too, was harassed. On April 3, police horsemen went back and forth through the torchlight march, held in Jerusalem, and the marchers were prevented from reaching Prime Minister Shamir's residence, on the eve of his departure for the U.S. On the following day, police harassment reached its peak when four women were arrested while participating in a vigil at Megiddo prison. The treatment the women got after being arrested made it necessary for one to be hospitalized.

Over thirty women participated in a demonstration called by WOFPP on April 17 - international prisoners day - in front of the Russian compound. The women's organization decided to focus on the Russian Compound following tear raising reports of sexual harassment of detainees under interrogation there. Among other things, women detainees testified that they were strip-searched while male interrogators entered the room and verbally abused them, beaten with clubs on the sexual organs, threatened with rape, fondled by male interrogators and interrogated by a female interrogator while naked.

Other forms of harassment protested were: lack of medical treatment; the cancelling of visits and the permission to bring in parcels for the flimsiest reason (such as the women singing!) and the "disappearance" of detainees for weeks, while police deny their presence in the detention center.

The demonstration was observed by a lawyer from the Association for Civil Rights in order to ensure that the participants would not be forcibly dispersed and detained as previously happened. It seems that the large number of participants and the presence of reporters and photographers also helped to deter the

police, and the demonstration ended peacefully. Palestinians who had come to visit their relatives in the detention center saluted the demonstrators with the V-sign and shouted encouragement.

April 16, Beit Sahour

April 16, was announced as the day of Palestinian prisoners. There was a general strike in the Occupied Territories, and in many places there was some special event. In the town of Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem, the women arranged a meeting and a demonstration. As there are several women arrested who were in contact with Women For Political Prisoners, the organisation was invited to take part. Four women of WOFPP came to Beit Sahour. The meeting which took place in the basement of the local church was extremely orderly; a mother read a letter from her son, from Ansar-3; there was a political speech, and then the singing began. Sad songs about prison, fighting songs, everybody was singing, from grandmothers to small children. Afterwards we went, still singing, on demonstration through the town, with a Palestinian flag flying, and everybody wearing rosettes in the colours of that flag. In the town we nearly saw no young men. Everywhere signs of the Intifada: a man with both legs broken, a cairn of stones where somebody was killed, bullets holes in walls. Suddenly - quiet: a settlers' car driving very quickly, with arms on ready. There are some hisses and boos, but no stones.

The demonstration ended in a visit of condolence to the house of a family whose son was killed. On the roof of the house - a Palestinian flag. Here we met with soldiers: a military jeep came to investigate, and to take down the flag. The flag is taken down in the usual way: the soldiers catch a boy, take his identity card and return it only when he takes down the flag and brings it to them. The soldiers tell the women to disperse, while standing with the tear gas canisters ready in a rather threatening way. Here we, the Israeli women, come to the fore: we walk to the soldiers, to make obvious that if anything happens, there are Israeli witnesses. The soldiers are not happy: they abuse us in very unflattering terms, but they don't do anything. The women disperse, slowly and unwillingly. We go with the last of them, as a sort of "rear guard"; the military jeep drives slowly after us, the whole looks rather like a funeral. But there comes a diversion: a settlers' car apparently asks for a military escort - and the jeep goes with them. Now we can say goodbye to the proud and courageous women of Beit Sahour, and go home.

Chava Cohen

Other activities marking prisoners day were held by Down with the Occupation in Jerusalem and Stop the Occupation in Tel-Aviv, Haifa and Beit Sahour (see box p.8).

Contact: WOFPP, P.O.Box 31811, Tel-Aviv 61318, Israel.

March 8: International Women's Day. In the Occupied Territories, women's demonstrations were brutally dispersed. In Tel-Aviv, hundreds of Jewish and Arab women set up a "peace tent" on Municipality Square, and later joined a march in which placards calling for the release of imprisoned Palestinian women and for Israeli-Palestinian peace were prominent.

At the Knesset in Jerusalem, the government organised a rival meeting, at which Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir spoke eloquently about women's rights... Security forces in the West Bank town Beit Jala chose this particular day to arrest 23-year old Terry Bulata. Afflicted with a grave liver disease, Bulata was due to go to the United States, to undergo special treatment. Instead, she was placed in Ha'sharon prison, where her family is not even allowed to bring her her special medicines.

The Nahalin tragedy

In 1954, dozens of the inhabitants of Nahalin - a small, remote West Bank village then under Jordanian rule - were killed in a cross-border "repraisal raid" by an Israeli command unit, led by (then) major Ariel Sharon. At the time, these events aroused heated debates inside Israel and in the U.N.. During the next thirty-five years, however, the world forgot about this village. It was occupied in 1967 by the Israeli army together with the rest of the West Bank, and during the 1970s was hemmed in by a growing network of Israeli settlements.

In the Intifada, Nahalin got among Israeli soldiers and settlers the name of being "a problematic village", whose inhabitants take an active part in demonstrations and carry surrounding villages with them. Patrols of the notorious Border Guard unit started to 'visit' the village daily, forcing the inhabitants to erase slogans and remove flags. The patrols were often greeted by stone-throwing boys. Apparently, the Border Guards began to regard the village's subjugation as

a private vendetta; they took to driving with their jeeps, shouting curses and abuse at the villagers through the loudspeakers, and threatening the village women with rape.

On the night of April 13, a Border Guard force made its way through the mountain paths with the intention of taking the Nahalin villagers by surprise, but was seen at a neighboring village. The news reached the Nahalin mosque, where a Ramadan fast night prayer was taking place. The worshippers issued out, and a warning was called on the mosque's loud-speaker - normally in use to call the faithful to prayer.

At the entrance to Nahalin, the Border Guards encountered a crowd of several hundred villagers, armed with sticks, stones and pitchforks. They immediately started wild shooting, killing four people on the spot and wounding at least fifty. After three quarters of an hour, a regular army unit, attracted by the shooting, arrived at the village. The Border Guards asked for fresh ammunition, but the soldiers, looking at the carnage, refused. Some soldiers started to tend to the wounded, which elicited from the Border Guards exclamations such as "leftists, why are you helping this scum!". According to some press accounts, a fist-fight began between soldiers and Border Guards, who also threw stones at each other in the village streets (*Hadashot* 14.4.89, *Yediot-Aharonot* 17.4.89).

For several days the exact number of those killed was not known. A fifth villager was considered dead, and only on the following week was discovered among the dozens who were detained on the night of the raid.

Under the public outcry in Israel, the commander of the army's Central Command, General Amram Mitzna, who did not seem particularly shocked, announced on the evening television news the formation of a military investigative board.

On the next day, April 14, when Shamir returned from his U.S. visit, the road at the outskirts of Jerusalem was lined by Peace Now supporters, who had organised overnight and to express their fury over Nahalin.

The military board of inquiry did start, within a few days, its investigation. At least, it visited the scene of the crime; upon its arrival Nahalin was put under curfew, and some more villagers were imprisoned.

Land Day

On March 30, 1976, Israel's Arab citizens held a general strike, to protest land confiscations; the government sent army and police units into the Arab villages; six demonstrators lost their lives.

In 1989, the yearly commemoration date was again a day of general strike. This time, however, the government was far more cautious.

During the intervening thirteen years, the Arab population has transformed itself into a cohesive force, and won for itself - by a hard struggle - some of the basic rights which Israeli democracy was supposed to safeguard to all its citizens. Moreover, with the Intifada raging in the Occupied Territories (on Land Day itself, two more lives were claimed in the West Bank), the government had no desire to open a second front. Thus, an uneasy balance was maintained: Ministers made threatening statements and large police forces were mobilised - outside the Arab towns and villages. Inside them, the strike was observed by the entire population; marches and rallies took place, expressing the population's strong solidarity with the struggling Palestinians in the Territories.

There was a noticeable presence of Jewish peace activists, who carried slogans in Hebrew and Arabic; on the platform too, there were several Jewish speakers at all rallies. Altogether, it was an impressive demonstration of the Arab population's ability to mobilise its resources.

During the campaign for the February Municipal elections, at Acre, Likud Deputy Mayor David Bar-Lev called for "transfer" of the Arab population out of the city. The call, which aroused a storm, was answered, on February 12, by hundreds of Jews and Arabs from a wide coalition of parties and peace movements. They stood holding hands and linking up in a living chain the Jewish and the Arab quarters of Acre.

The same elections a municipal council seat to a Jewish-Arab electoral list in Upper Nazareth, a separate town built in the 1950s on land confiscated from Arab Nazareth, with the intention of creating "a town for Jews only".

Political trials

Asaf Adiv and Ya'akov Ben-Efrat, sentenced to 18 and 30 months imprisonment, respectively, in the *Derech HaNitzotz* case, have been transferred to the Kfar Yonah "Ashmoret" prison and are being held under harsh conditions of isolation.

Unlike all other prisoners, the two were not brought before a Prisons Service commission, to determine which prison they will be sent to for completing their sentence; they were told that their status had been decided "from high up".

Kfar Yonah, where the two editors are held, is a special prison for prisoners in need of special protection, i.e. those whose lives are in danger in all other prisons in the country. The prison's population consists mainly of state witnesses and collaborators of the police. The Nitzotz prisoners are held alone in one cell, in which they are locked for 22 hours a day. Bi-weekly visits are held with the prisoners and their visitors, including Ben-Efrat's two children, separated by a double partition which makes any physical contact impossible.

Most Palestinians prisoners are held in far worse conditions. Members of the right-wing underground, however – convicted of the premeditated murder of Palestinians – are allowed to stay out of their cells "a bit more". A photograph of one of them lately became front page news showing him taken on the shoulders of his fellow settlers through the streets of Hebron and threatening the Arab inhabitants with death. He was sent home for the Purim holiday...

Those who support the demand for better conditions for the Nitzotz prisoners – who have now been adopted by Amnesty International – are requested to write letters of protest to: *Chaim Bar-Lev, Minister of Police, Ministry of Police, Jerusalem; copies to: HaNitzotz, P.O.Box 1575, Jerusalem. (In the last issue, a mistaken address of HaNitzotz was published.)*

During March and April, the Jerusalem District Court continued to hear the trial of Michael Warshawski, former director of the Alternative Information Center (AIC) (see issue 25, p. 4-5 and issue 34, p. 2). Warshawski is being charged with supporting – and providing services to – a terrorist organization (thirteen years maximum), through providing type-setting services to newspapers

published on the West Bank. The prosecution has already presented most of its witnesses – mainly policemen and members of the Shabak (*security service*), as well as a typist who had typed some of the material in question, under Warshawski's direction.

To secure a conviction, the prosecution would need to prove two points: first, that West Bank organizations such as "The Students' Progressive Action Front" and "The Action Committee of Working Women" possess "an affinity" with "The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine" – one of the organizations defined as "terrorist" by Israeli law.

Provided that such affinity is proved, the prosecution also needs to prove that, while accepting the job of typesetting these organizations' newspapers, the AIC knew about their "terrorist affinities".

As the AIC people point out, the conviction of Warshawski would imply that any Israeli wishing to work with politically active Palestinians must first become a freelance security service agent and conduct an investigation into the Palestinians' affairs. Thus, the outcome of the trial might have crucial importance for all the Israeli individuals and groups engaged in contacts with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories.

A campaign is being conducted in defence of Michael Warshawski and the AIC. On February 5, a petition was published in *Ha'aretz* – signed by 79 French lawyers, human rights activists and artists, as well as of nine members of the French National Assembly – calling for a halt to the Warshawski trial. Similar petitions are circulating in other countries.

Contact: *AIC, P.O.Box 24278, Jerusalem, Israel.*

After a nine months' blackout, during which an international campaign was conducted, the Mahmoud Masarwa trial was opened to the public – and the prosecution's case started to crumble. Doubt was cast on whether the trees Masarwa supposedly burned with a Molotov cocktail ever existed; it seems that he signed the "confession" after being systematically beaten and having his teeth and ribs broken by the interrogators. As to the charge of "grave espionage", it now seems that the paper which Masarwa found and sent to the London-based *Militant*

newspaper was not a "top secret police record" but an unclassified document. Now, more than ever, it seems that the authorities' true interest in Masarwa was due to his political and trade-unionist activities, in particular his success in organising a strike in which Jewish and Arab workers participated together – an extremely difficult feat for an Arab in Israel.

Contact: *Labour Campaign for the Release of Mahmoud Masarwa, P.O.Box 524, London E2, U.K.*

Long road to the stage

by Beate Keizer

On April 18, 1989, the play *Ephraim returns to the army* by Yitzhak Laor had its long-awaited première in Tel-Aviv – at the culmination of a struggle lasting more than three years.

The play deals with a military governor of a town in the occupied West Bank and the conflicts arising in his private and public life, especially regarding a stone-throwing Palestinian youth who was shot dead by a soldier. Written in 1984 and originally slated for production by the Haifa Municipal Theatre, the play was banned by the Board of Censors, on the grounds that "it offended the good name of the Israel Defence Forces".

Backed by the playwrights' union, the author appealed to the Supreme Court and won the case (*The Other Israel n° 28, p. 7*). Coming after the failure of no less than fourteen previous appeals by playwrights and theatres concerning other disputed plays, this constituted a significant victory for the freedom of expression in Israel. Indeed, it became the stepping stone towards a recent majority decision of the Knesset, altogether abolishing censorship on plays. The Supreme Court's verdict, however, was formulated in a way to make the victory in this special case quite a sour one. The judges defined the play as "a vulgar mixture of sex and trampling on national values", the only reason not to forbid its production being "Israel's democratic traditions".

After this first appearance of the Supreme Court judges in the role of theatre critics, the Haifa Municipal Theatre no longer trusted its own artistic judgment. Pressured by its Board of Trustees and by the – Labor – mayor of Haifa it decided

not to reschedule the play for performance. Nor would any other public theatre in Israel take it up!

Finally, a group of Jewish and Arab theatre people and supporters of the play established "The Fellowship for the Advancement of Theatrical Culture". The organization took quite a financial risk by producing the play without the usual government funding.

It might have been shocking for part of the audience present at the première to find out that La'or's play is not an easy piece for doves.

By exposing the "enlightened" - Ephraim is a "progressive military governor" - Yitzchak Laor did not choose an easy path: those who should support his freedom of criticism are criticised themselves. Not being afraid of doing so, showing the courage to expose his own side might, however, result in the play having a bigger impact on those of the audience who did not - yet? - identify their place in the political spectrum. Possibly, that is what frightened the authorities more than anything else.

Contact: *The Fellowship for the Advancement of Theatrical Culture*, P.O.Box 36379, Tel-Aviv 61363. (Donations to help pay the bills are more than welcome.)

Censorship on the air

During the years commentators and diskjockeys at The Israeli Army's Radio Station, have developed a considerable degree of independence, which was the root of recurring conflicts with the military authorities. The latest of these rows broke out over "After us, the deluge", a new song by the popular singer Nurit Galron. The song contains passages such as: *There is a state of stones and petrol bombs, / And there is Tel-Aviv lit up by nightclubs and lewdness, / There is a state in revolt, where wounds are bandaged, / And there is Tel-Aviv partying, living, eating and drinking. / Don't tell me about a girl who lost her eye, / That just makes me feel bad, bad, bad, / That just makes me feel bad.*

After the station's commander Nahman Shai declared it "restricted", because of its being "sympathetic to the Intifada", the song's text could be found printed in all papers.

On February 21, 1989, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat visited Cairo. At

Cairo airport he was interviewed by Ehud Ya'ari of the Israeli Television, but Uri Porat - the Israeli Broadcasting Agency's Director-General - forbade its transmission, as several months before he forbade television coverage of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence. However, on February 24, Arafat held his first press conference for Israeli journalists. Ya'ari participated in the press conference and conducted a second interview, which was broadcast the same night without consulting Porat. The news editors defended themselves by claiming that the Director-Generals's approval is needed only for interviews specifically sought by reporters, but not for coverage of press conferences.

A few weeks later, Porat ordered the suspension of Shimon Shiffer, the Israeli radio's U.S. correspondent, because of Shiffer's "overenthusiastic" coverage of the Israeli-PLO meeting in New-York. A number of radio and TV employees began to lobby Labor Education Minister Navon not to renew Porat's appointment, which expired in April. In response, the Likud started a campaign of full-page advertisements supporting Porat and warning of "a leftist take-over of the radio and TV". Nevertheless, Navon replaced Porat by Yosef Bar'el, a TV professional having no clear political affiliation.

Likud members of the Broadcasting Agency responded by demanding the resignation of TV news editor Rafik Halabi, a Druse, whom they accused of having fomented the anti-Porat agitation. Within a day, all news editors signed a petition expressing solidarity with Halabi and condemning the attack on him as motivated by racism.

Last issue, we told our readers about the Interior Ministry's threat to close down *Al-Ra'aya* newspaper in Nazareth. Unfortunately, we have to report that, despite protests expressed also by Hebrew newspapers, the threat has become reality.

The Interior Ministry's Northern District Commissioner did invite the paper's editor to respond to allegations that the paper is "financed by terrorist organizations". However, this was an empty gesture, and the decision - taken beforehand at the secret services' headquarters - was implemented. The closing of *Al-Ra'aya* was accompanied by various acts of police harassment against the Ibna-al-Balad movement, which published

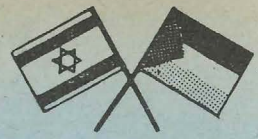
it, aimed especially at disrupting the movement's participation in the municipal elections.

Contact: *Ibna-al-Balad*, P.O.Box 2385, Nazareth.

Since the 1970s, the religious Bar-Ilan University had become increasingly dominated by the nationalist right. In the last two years, this domination is being challenged by the "Sela" (Students for Peace and Tolerance) group. Its activity is encountering great opposition from both the right-wing student union and the university administration. In February 1989, Sela members put up posters, inviting students for their meetings. The organisers immediately received a notice from the university's legal section, informing them that any material put up without permission of the university security officer would be confiscated and a complaint lodged in the police against those who published it. When the Sela organisers approached the security officer, permission to put up their material was flatly denied. Sela is now collecting signatures on a petition, demanding to establish freedom of expression in the Bar-Ilan campus.

Neo-Zealots

Each year, on February 10, Peace Now activists hold vigils in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem, in memory of the first Israeli peace-activist who had to pay with his life for his beliefs. On this day in 1983 Emil Grünzweig was killed by a grenade thrown at a crowd of Peace Now demonstrators by a right-wing extremist. This year the commemoration took place amidst news of a new extreme right underground. The "Sicarii" model themselves upon Jewish zealots of the first century A.D., who carried daggers ("sica" in Latin) with which to kill those they considered "traitors". In British ruled Palestine, during the 1930s, Jewish admirers of Mussolini sought to emulate the ancient Sicarii. This group was implicated in the assassination of Chaim Arlosorov, leader of the Labor Zionists. Their present-day inheritors have started in a more modest way, by setting on fire cars and the doors of apartments. Among the victims of such acts were Mapam K.M. Ya'ir Tzaban; poet and satirist Dan Almagor (see *previous issue*, p.4.); journalist and TV commentator Dan Margalit, after he interviewed Feisal Husseini



on television; Mina Tzemach, who conducted the poll showing that in December 1988 54% of the Israeli public supported negotiations with the PLO (according to the latest poll it is now 65.7%); and Rachel Cohen, director of a clinic treating East Jerusalem Arabs.

On April 10, the Sicarii shifted to another level of activity; one of their members, armed with a gun, shot down a group of young Arab inhabitants of the old city of Jerusalem. One of them was killed and three – wounded. The police has not yet found a trace of the killer.

Campaigning in England

by Adam Keller

During February and March 1989, I have visited Britain, helping to launch the newly-founded "Campaign for Israeli-Palestinian Peace". These were very busy weeks of traveling all over England, from Brighton up to Newcastle – usually seeing, in each town, nothing but the railway station and the hall in which the meeting took place.

I had numerous meetings and encounters with trade unionists, Members of Parliament, and a bewildering variety of political groups and factions. Altogether, I got an intensive introduction to the British political life – sharply polarised, like in Israel, though on different issues. From the outset I realised – rather to my surprise – that in Britain, too, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a sensitive issue. This is due, in part, to the activity of some groups – especially in the universities – who still cling to the idea of an undivided "secular democratic Palestine" and are inclined to regard anybody accepting the existence of Israel as "a Zionist", which – in their view – means automatically "a racist"; supporters of the two-state solution were in this way attacked and smeared. Since Algiers, such groups are faced with a dilemma by the PLO's adoption of the two-state solution and its recognition of Israel. At the Manchester meeting, one speaker accused the PLO of "selling out" and called upon the Palestinians to create, instead, "a new revolutionary leadership". He was shouted down by

Palestinian students, who resented having an Englishman choose their leadership for them; one Palestinian actually condemned this attempt as "a continuation of British colonialism".

In fact, one of the most encouraging features were the many encounters with Palestinians willing – and indeed enthusiastic – to engage in dialogue, among them Karma Nabulsi, Deputy PLO Representative in Britain, who shared the platform with me at one of the London meetings. While reiterating the Palestinian people's determination to continue their struggle as long as the occupation continues, she stated that the PLO had dropped the demand for one secular-democratic state after its leadership realised that the Zionists, too, have their own national identity.

Another important element of the tour were the encounters with a wide spectrum of British Jews: among others, there was the Jewish Socialists' Group, old friends and veteran supporters of the two-state solution; a more loose coalition of critical Jews in the Leeds-Sheffield area, known as "Ruach"; and the left-Zionist "Habonim" youth movement, who hosted at their London headquarters my meeting with the Friends of Yesh Gvul. Of special interest were meetings with various activists of the Union of Jewish Students. It was clear that these greatly differed from each other – as can be expected in an organization aiming to represent all Jewish students in the British universities. Its program was evidently phrased to bridge over these differences. It states that "The Palestinians (...) are a people without a home, and their right to a state is unquestionable", while, at the same time, it also praises the Israeli Labor Party for its efforts to "provide an alternative to the PLO". Altogether, there was a great deal of confusion, which was also reflected in the way the British Jewish press covered my public appearances. The "Jewish Chronicle" published only a short and hostile piece about the London meeting, while the "Jewish Telegraph" extensively covered, my lecture at Leeds University.

A year and a half of Intifada has wrought many changes in public consciousness in Britain (as elsewhere). The two-state solution is becoming more and more accepted,

which might lead not only to peace in the Middle-East, but also to cooperation between Friends of Israel and Friends of Palestine in Britain, in order to help achieve that peace. I hope I may have made some useful contribution to this end.

CAMPAIGN FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

CIPP was founded in solidarity with the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. CIPP aims to promote in Britain the ideas and aims of the ICIPP, in which a central part is the advocating of talks between Israel and the PLO on the basis of a two-state solution to the conflict. As Israeli repression of the Palestinian Intifada intensifies, it is vital that we make solidarity with both the Palestinians and the Israeli left.

1. CIPP will organise distribution of *The Other Israel*, the ICIPP journal, in Britain.
 2. CIPP will engage in financial and material aid for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and for the Israeli Peace Movement.
 3. CIPP will publish its own newsletter. Members will receive this in addition to *The Other Israel*. It will include reports from the Israeli and Palestinian press, and articles by members.
 4. CIPP will arrange meetings between the PLO, members of the Jewish community, and Israeli peace activists.
 5. CIPP will publicise the activities of left-wing Oriental Jewish groups in Israel, who are struggling against the stereotype of Oriental Jews being collectively anti-Palestinian.
 6. CIPP will challenge both Israeli and Arab chauvinism, maintaining the right of both peoples to self-determination. CIPP is against boycotts of Israeli goods.
 7. CIPP will fight anti-Semitism and anti-Arabism. We reject the idea that Zionism is racism, and other such smears.
 8. CIPP will work with similar groups in Europe and the USA.
 9. CIPP will organise political tours of Israel and the Occupied Territories.
- We aim to work primarily in the labour movement and in both the Jewish and Palestinian communities living in Britain. If you want to take part in the struggle for peace in the Middle East, then join CIPP now.

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