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DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

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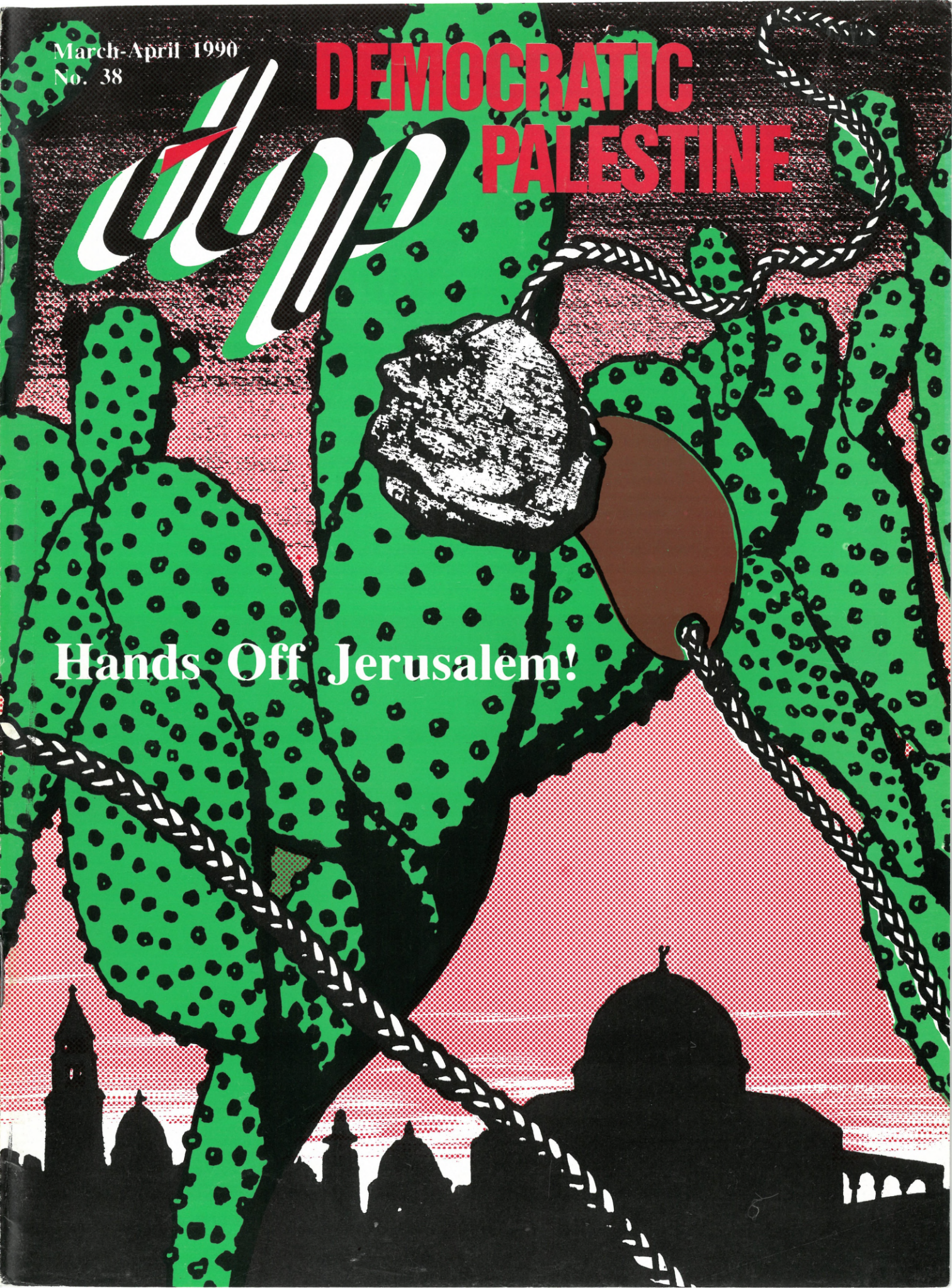

Hands Off Jerusalem!

Democratic Palestine is an English language magazine published with the following aims:
— Conveying the political line of progressive Palestinian and Arab forces;
— Providing current information and analysis pertinent to the Palestinian liberation struggle, as well as developments on the Arab and international levels;
— Serving as a forum for building relations of mutual solidarity between the Palestinian revolution and progressive organizations, parties, national liberation movements and countries around the world.

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This issue was sent to press April 18, 1990.

The Uprising, United, Will Never Be Defeated

by Itimad Musa

Palestinians recently celebrated several important achievements of the intifada, as resistance to the occupation continued to escalate. The occupation authorities responded predictably, killing at least 40 Palestinians and wounding and arresting hundreds in the first three months of 1990. But most importantly, Palestinian unity held firm in the face of ongoing Zionist attempts to drive a wedge between the nationalist forces.

The force of the intifada made itself felt in the Knesset in an historic way when the so-called national unity government of Israel collapsed in mid-March(see article in this issue). Amid finger-pointing and mud-slinging, superficial explanations suggested that the cause of the government's demise was its inability to respond to the Baker proposals. This analysis ignores the root cause of the collapse: the two-year-old Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories. This is the first time in history that concerted Palestinian action has brought down an Israeli government.

Another breakthrough for the Palestinian struggle came from abroad when the European Parliament recommended in mid-January to freeze scientific cooperation with Israel until the authorities reopen Palestinian universities shut since the beginning of the intifada. In addition to the freeze on funds worth $10 million, the European Commission(EC) indefinitely postponed two European-Israeli seminars on economic and scientific cooperation(Associated Press, February 19th). Even though the sanctions aren't binding until adopted by the EC's ministerial committee, the move was apparently enough to prompt the Israeli authorities to at least start reopening on an individual basis the 16 Palestinian community colleges and vocational schools in the occupied territories. Although all Palestinian universities and many high schools remain closed, this measure shows the effect that even mild international sanctions can have on the Israeli government's policies in the territories; one can only speculate as to the effect sweeping sanctions would have.

The EC also issued a strongly worded statement in February condemning Israel's building of settlements in the occupied territories. Many European and world leaders have expressed opposition to new settlements in the territories, especially during the recent influx of thousands of Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel. Even British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has joined the chorus of international voices opposing Jewish settlements in Israeli-occupied Palestinian land. In an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper in April, Thatcher called settling Soviet Jews in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, illegal(Associated Press, April 3rd). In the United Nations, many Arab and non-Arab countries have protested Jewish settlements in the territories, but a Security Council resolution has yet to be passed on the issue.

Amnesty International, in a report published January 3rd, strongly criticized Israel's open-fire policy, asserting that the authorities are «effectively condoning, perhaps even encouraging, extrajudicial executions...»

Settler activity was heightened during Easter week in the Christian quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem when 150 Jewish settlers occupied a four-building complex of the Greek Orthodox Church. Israeli police fired tear gas at clergymen and other Palestinians protesting the building's occupation.

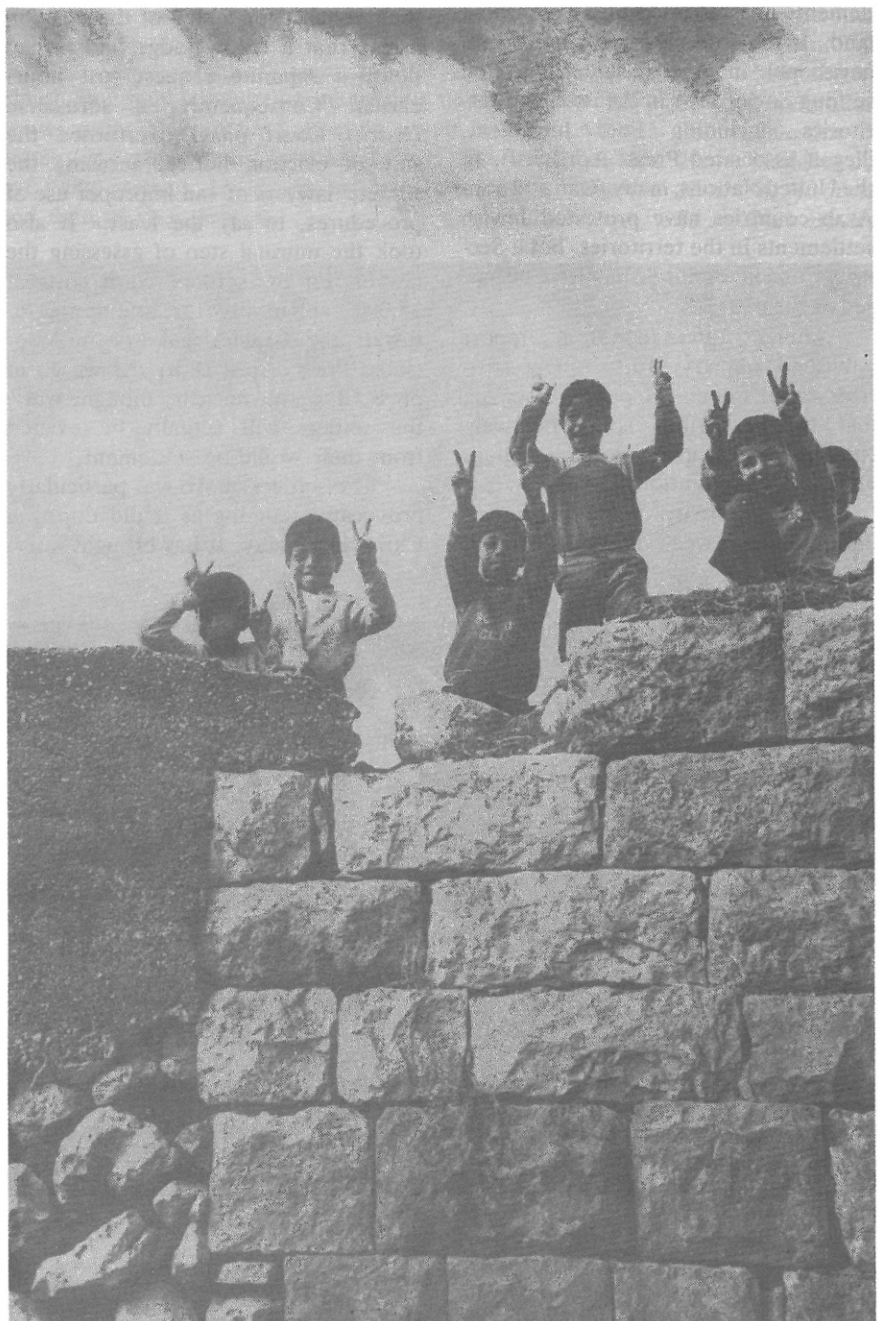
The settlers alleged they bought the complex. Apparently they would stop at nothing, including shady legal maneuvers, to establish their «right» to colonize the Old City. Their lawyers failed to inform the judge who granted their request for a stay of the eviction notice that a fellow judge had turned down a separate request just hours earlier. Consequently, a Jerusalem District Court panel overturned the stay of eviction notice, accusing the settlers' lawyers of «an improper use of procedures, to say the least.» It also took the unusual step of assessing the lawyers for the settlers' court costs of $5,000, apparently for attempting to thwart the Israeli legal system(Associated Press, April 18th). As we go to press, it is still unclear, though, when the settlers will actually be evicted from their would-be settlement.

The settlers' move was particularly provocative coming as it did during a Christian holiday. It has brought inter- ▶

national condemnation, and further strengthened Christian-Muslim unity in the struggle against occupation.

Accomplishments on the ground

An important moral victory occurred on March 11th when five political prisoners from Gaza escaped from Ansar III detention center in the Negev. Two were caught and one turned himself in to UN observer forces in the Sinai, while two escaped into Egypt. Despite two of the prisoners being captured, the break-out alone represents a significant victory for the Palestinians on the psychological battlefield that is part of the intifada. As one ex-detainee of Ansar III from Gaza noted after eight months in administrative detention, opening the camp at the beginning of the intifada was part of the authorities' attempt to reestablish the barrier of fear between them and the Palestinians which the uprising had torn down. The isolated setting, extraordinary brutality and notoriously harsh conditions were carefully designed not just to intimidate prisoners, but the entire Palestinian population. Certainly the Zionist authorities hoped that as the camp's infamous reputation grew, the threat of internment there would deter activism, thus crippling the intifada. What they obviously didn't forsee was Ansar III becoming perhaps the quintessential symbol of Palestinian resistance and steadfastness. In this context, the escape from the prison camp dealt another blow to the authorities.



Unity among nationalist forces was strengthened on March 1st when the General Federation of Trade Unions in the West Bank announced that it was reunifying. A statement issued by the 16-member executive committee described reunification as necessary «in order to fulfill the hopes and aspirations of our workers and the people at large in view of the challenges posed at this critical stage...»(*Al Fajr,* March 5th). The executive also asserted the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state, and described the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

National unity on a broader scale was reaffirmed in a statement issued in March by 34 prominent Palestinians. They asserted the PLO's right to form and announce any Palestinian delegation to participate in a dialogue with Israel. The statement emphasized that no Palestinian from the occupied territories will participate in a delegation not announced by the PLO. Furthermore, any dialogue must have an open agenda and be conducted under international auspices as a step toward the convening of an international conference. Finally, they stressed the need for the intifada to continue.Although a Palestinian national consensus has yet to be reached on the benefits of a dialogue, such as the one proposed to take place in Cairo, and specifically under what conditions, the statement laid to rest rumors circulating in the Israeli press concerning the formation of a Palestinian delegation, making it clear that the PLO could not be bypassed in the peace process.

The Israeli media were busy in March churning out rumors obviously designed to undermine Palestinian national unity. The target of recent Israeli reports was the PFLP, which was allegedly on the verge of splitting from the UNL and, in an apparent reference to Hamas, preparing to work with other Palestinian organizations outside the framework of the PLO. Although field coordination does exist between the

PFLP and Hamas as part of the UNL's longstanding attempts to draw Hamas into the organization, the assertion that the Front is going to withdraw from the UNL is absurd. Although differences of opinion have been expressed concerning the political line of the UNL and practical action in the occupied territories, the PFLP has strongly reaffirmed the need for national unity and the continuation of democratic dialogue within the UNL. All liberation movements experience varying degrees of internal disagreement, as this is a natural and necessary part of the revolutionary process. That this occurs within the UNL is thus a normal phenomenon and, in fact, speaks for its democratic nature. Thus, official Israeli postulations that the PFLP is going to split from the UNL are clear attempts to drive a wedge between the two.

Accompanying the false rumors of disunity was intensified repression against the Palestinian population. The West Bank town of Beit Furik near Nablus was under curfew for 11 days in mid-March as thousands of soldiers, using helicopters, besieged the village. The army arrested hundreds of people and conducted tax raids on homes in a fashion reminiscent of Beit Sahour. The repression came in response to an escalation of the intifada in recent months. Women demonstrators numbering in the hundreds marked International Women's Day with demonstrations throughout the occupied territories. In Jerusalem, 150 women carrying Palestinian flags were attacked by Israeli police and border guards firing rubber bullets and tear gas. In Tulkarm, women demonstrators attacked military patrols with stones and bottles(*Al Fajr,* March 12th). On Land Day there were large-scale demonstrations in both the 1948 and 1967 occupied territories. In Taibe, violent confrontations took place with the police, resulting in the injury of several policemen and the arrest of many Palestinians. Demonstrations took place in every major city in the West Bank, despite the massing of extra troops. All of Gaza was under curfew for the third time this year, but this did not deter Gazans from staging demonstrations on this important Palestinian national holiday.

There was a marked rise in collaborator violence in January, according to the Palestinian Human Rights Information Center's report for January '90. In Kufr Salem, armed masked men, taking over the usual role of the security forces, attacked the home of a wanted youth who managed to escape. In Zawiyeh village near Tulkarm, the local mukhtar, who is a well-known collaborator, opened fire on residents when he was stoned, injuring a young woman. In the most serious attack which occurred in Shweikh near Tulkarm, a known activist was kidnapped by masked men posing as members of a local strike force. His mutiliated body was found several days later. Villagers and nationalist groups believe he was killed by collaborators or security forces.

In addition to violent attacks by the occupation forces, other forms of pressure were tried recently against the Palestinians. In January, the Israeli Transportation Ministry tried to intimidate East Jerusalem bus drivers into not participating in general strikes called by the UNL. The ministry sent a letter to the bus companies threatening to revoke their licenses if they continued to strike. Despite the threat, buses did not operate during the general strike called on January 9th and, in defiance of a second threat, on January 17th (PHRIC January report).

Further violent and political attacks notwithstanding, Palestinians continue to stand firm against Israeli attempts to crush the uprising. As yet another intifada spring begins in the occupied territories, the masses can take pride in several consequential achievements of the past few months. ●

Palestinian arrested in Taibe on Land Day

Trade Unions Reunited

This year Palestinians are celebrating May 1st, International Workers' Day, with particular enthusiasm in view of the reunification of the West Bank trade union movement.

On March 1st, the reunification of the General Federation of Trade Unions in the West Bank, occupied State of Palestine,was announced. This healed the division that had prevailed since the 1981 split in the federation. While the division corresponded to political differences in the Palestinian arena and was basically caused by the right wing, it was also rooted in changing realities in the 1967 occupied territories, and the failure of the existing trade union movement to respond adequately to the new situation. Since the 1967 occupation, land confiscation has pushed more and more Palestinians to work in industry and services; with the subordination of the local economy, increased numbers of them were driven to work in Israel. But while the Palestinian working class was growing, the occupation authorities imposed a series of restrictions to hinder the process of unionization. Obviously, Palestinian trade unions were not authorized to negotiate on behalf of Palestinians working in Israeli concerns and, in official terms, these workers could not be unionized. The formation of a new union, as well as the list of candidates for office in existing unions, had to be approved by the military government. Just to give one example of the consequences of this, of 50 applications to form new unions since 1967, five were approved(*Al Fajr*, February 6, 1989). Many unions refused to submit to this illegal interference, and thus functioned without permission.

The West Bank Trade Union Federation has traditionally been led by the Palestinian communists who deserve much credit for the first efforts to unionize the Palestinian working class. However, with the expansion of the working class, other progressive forces began protesting that they were not accorded just representation in the existing trade unions. At the same time, the various Palestinian political contingents formed labor blocs to organize more workers in the context of the overall rise of the mass movement in the occupied territories in the early eighties.

Democratic reorganization

The March reunification of the federation was preceded by four months of intense dialogue to find means of overcoming these problems. A 16-member executive committee was formed to reorganize the trade union movement according to a new internal charter. The aim is merging all the existing unions on a district basis. This means regrouping about 100 unions into 20 general unions to be based in Jenin, Ramallah, Nablus, Hebron, Bethlehem, Tulkarm, Qalqilya and Jerusalem. These unions will be open to all workers, and elections will be based on principles of democracy and proportional representation of all the participating forces. General elections are to be held within one year or, if this proves unfeasible, within two years.

With the March 1st reunification, the various trade unions and labor blocs were represented in the federation's executive committee, save for the Workers' Unity Bloc which was accorded two seats, but initially failed to join, saying that proportional representation had not been correctly implemented. In addition, a general secretariat was formed as the highest decision-making body. The secretariat is composed of five members: two representing the Youth Movement and one each representing the Front for Trade Union Action, the Progressive Bloc and the Workers' Unity Bloc. The general secretariat is charged with drafting a new constitution and internal charter for the federation as soon as possible. Once approved, these documents cannot be amended without the agreement of all the signatories. Thus, the federation has been opened to all nationalist political trends and labor blocs. It is in the process of reorganization on a firmer, more democratic and unified basis. All progressive and nationalist forces are called upon to join in this process to ensure its success.

The intifada and the federation

While much of the reunification process focused on organizational matters to rectify the problems of the past, there is no doubt that the driving force for the new labor unity is the intifada itself. More than anything else, the intifada has tangibly proved what great gains can be made via united mass struggle and democratic, collective leadership. From the onset, workers have been on the frontlines of the intifada, bearing credit for some of its major achievements. Statistics released by Israel's biggest bank, Hapoalim, in early 1990 estimated the direct losses to Israel in production and economic growth during the first two years of the intifada to be $800 million to $1 billion. Along with the Palestinian boycott of Israeli products, the main cause of these losses was Palestinian workers going on strike. In addition, Palestinian workers stood on the frontlines in the battle against the imposition of the new magnetic ID cards. The trade unions reuniting enables further consolidation of the working class role in the intifada.

The March 1st announcement reiterated the federation's commitment to the resolutions of the 19th PNC. The reunification of the federation is a significant contribution to the consolidation of national unity in the framework of the PLO. Here it is relevant to note that the federation was the first mass organization in the occupied territories to declare adherence to the PLO when it broke away from the Jordanian federation after the 1970 Black September massacre.

The reunification declaration pledged the federation's intent to make «efforts to develop the trade union movement to fulfill its vanguard role

consistent with the sacrifices and aspirations of the working masses.» At a press conference in East Jerusalem, Shaher Saad, general secretary of the reunited federation, said that the executive committee will focus on reaching collective agreements with employers and seek «ways to help our workers defend their rights while promoting the economy.» Another primary task is to found new productive projects in order to provide work for the unemployed, especially those who were given green cards by the Israeli authorities, preventing them from entering Israel. The federation will also work to have employers provide health insurance for all workers and their families, and to secure academic scholarships for them. The federation will seek financial support from Arab and international trade unions, because lack of funds for starting any of the planned projects is one of the main obstacles to its work at present.

In an interview with *Al Fajr*, March 5th, George Hazboun, the deputy general secretary of the federation, stressed the importance of trade union cooperation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip: «First we have to be united, then we can proceed to unify the entire union movement in all of Palestine.» Trade union work has always been even more difficult in Gaza than in the West Bank. Until 1980, the trade unions were totally banned by the occupation authorities. When trade unions were allowed to start functioning in 1980, the authorities appointed the leadership. In the ensuing years, however, the nationalist forces have gained ground in union work.

At a time when Israeli and part of the international media are trying to show that the Islamic forces are overtaking the nationalists, especially in Gaza, the results of elections in three Gaza professional unions give a more objective picture of the balance of forces. In the January 19th elections of the Gaza Medical Association, the nationalist list won nine of 11 seats in the leadership; in the Engineers' Association elections on January 26th, the nationalists won four seats, while the Islamic forces won five; the Gaza Bar Association elected six nationalists and one from an Islamic group to serve in the leadership council.

Free the trade unionists!

An important political task of the federation is exposing Israeli repression against the Palestinian people and unionists in particular. Indeed, union leaders and activists figure prominently among those who have been arrested, expelled or martyred during the intifada. A recent case is that of Hani Baidoun who was arrested in Jerusalem on March 20th, brutally beaten and dragged to an Israeli military vehicle. Since then, there's been no information about him; no charges were specified and he was not allowed to see his wife, attorney or an ICRC representative.

Hani is 35 years old, the father of three children and a UNRWA officer. He was prominent in the formation of the West Bank Trade Union Federation and the founder of the Hotel Workers' Union in Jerusalem. Hani has been imprisoned by the occupation authorities before. In 1985, he was arrested and tortured, as a result of which he developed an ulcer, had a heart attack and lost hearing in his left ear. For this reason, his recent arrest is doubly alarming.

Hani may be known to some of our readers, since he visited the US in June 1989 as a guest speaker at the NGO convention, and toured 18 US and Canadian cities to speak about the Palestinian trade unions. He met with congressmen, and other politicians, such as Jesse Jackson, as well as with activists from the peace and human rights movements.

The reunification of the trade unions gives new impetus for more international solidarity with Palestinian workers to materially support the work of their federation, and to demand the release of imprisoned unionists, along with all political detainees in Israeli jails. ●

The Intifada

Meeting New Challenges

This article was written by the progressive US journalist Phyllis Bennis after her visit to occupied Palestine in February 1990.

Two years and three months ago, the intifada was all new. All at once, it was spontaneous and deeply-rooted; it was stone-throwing and tomato-growing; it was building a new Palestine for a new kind of Palestinian.

The intifada is older now, no longer spontaneous and its roots have penetrated deep into the layers of a multi-faceted Palestinian society. The uprising looks different now, even to an outsider visiting Palestine - but the most significant differences, those that herald the structural and political shifts in the intifada, do not appear so clearly on the surface. Understanding those changes means delving into the intifada's roots, analyzing the nature of the stages in its development.

When I visited occupied Palestine for the first time, in the spring of 1988, the intifada was in its first months. No one was sure how long it would last, and what would be gained from it. No one knew how high a price remained to be paid.

The intifada's infancy was ending. That first stage in which the spontaneous reaction to the years of occupation exploded in mass resistance, was coming to a close. That stage was characterized by the creation of new kinds of popular institutions to organize and take responsibility for the waves of unplanned militancy challenging the domination of the occupation authorities at the street level. Had the mass demonstrations, rock-throwing and other early forms of protest remained impromptu, the brutality of Israel's immediate efforts to crush the intifada might have done just that.

By the spring of 1988, the intifada was far from spontaneous. It had grown, matured, transformed itself into a society-wide challenge to Israeli occupation. Its immediate demand was freedom from the occupation's brutality and humiliation; its ultimate goal was - and remains - an independent Palestinian state.

The next phase focused on consolidating the popular organizations and transforming them into a network of institutions that collectively serve as the structures of the emerging Palestinian state. Most of the work was mobilized through various social sectors - virtually all of which were pulled into political motion by the power of the popular committees. Shopkeepers in the merchants' committee designed rules for the now-frequent commercial strikes; women's committees expanded their work to include economic self-sufficiency projects as well as political mobilization. Committees were created to carry out the tasks of education, agricultural production, medical care, guarding, food distribution and virtually every other aspect of collective social life.

The popular committees themselves, responsible for governing the new state-in-formation, took shape at every level of society - from block to neighborhood to city-wide, district and regional formations, culminating at the top of the pyramid in the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising(UNL). It was in the name of the UNL that the communiques, the numbered leaflets that form the «laws» of the nascent state, began to be issued.

The phase of institutionalizing the intifada seemed to culminate with the Declaration of Independence at the Algiers PNC in November 1988. The announcement of the State of Palestine gave new internal coherence, as well as international credibility to the national power structure being built. For Palestinians living under occupation, the issue of dual power with the Israeli occupation was taking on a newly concrete form, for every popular organization carried out two functions. Alongside the «official» task of providing medical services, coordinating agricultural cooperatives or guarding a village, for example, lay the second role of challenging the capacity of the occupation authority to govern.

When a six-week-long battle of wills broke out in early 1988 between Israeli soldiers and Ramallah's shopkeepers over the shops closing in accordance with the UNL's strike call, the real issue had little to do with whether a grocery store opened from 9 to 12, or from 3 to 6. But it had everything to do with who decided those kind of questions. When the soldiers finally abandoned their failed efforts to prevent the strike's success by forcing open shops, breaking locks, etc., the potential for Ramallah's popular committees to govern additional aspects of life in the town took on a new resilience.

Since the PNC, the consolidation of the intifada's infrastructure has largely been a success. The 21-hour-day commercial strike is an unchallenged reality throughout occupied Palestine. The boycott of Israeli goods has become second nature, and factories are on double shifts to keep up with the demands for national products. Women's committees have created numerous small and large-scale cooperatives that play important roles in village and refugee camp economic life.

But with the «normalization» of certain aspects of the intifada, a new stage is coming to the fore. While direct, militant resistance to the occupation's military and settler presence in Palestine continues unabated, its forms have changed. Large-scale demonstrations are less frequent these days - too many martyrs and serious injuries have been the result of such face-offs. But resistance is very much the name of the game in 1990's intifada, and much of it takes the shape of economic struggles to fight and defeat the occupation's efforts to strangle Palestine's national economic life and make day-to-day existence on the individual level so untenable that some, perhaps many Palestinians would choose «voluntary» exile in the hopes of finding a better life for their children.

Beyond the struggle to survive and to resist Tel Aviv's economic onslaught, the new stage has also been shaped by the effort to realize the gains of the intifada in the diplomatic arena. The stage emerged in the context of the dramatic opening of a US-PLO «dialogue». While still not recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and still rejecting the creation of an independent Palestinian state, Washington's move gave tacit acceptance to PLO involvement in any peace

effort. The new talks and the Palestinian concessions that paved the way for them, laid to rest Henry Kissinger's infamous 1975 agreement with Israel that the US would refuse to talk with the organization until it renounced terrorism and recognized Israel.

On the ground in the intifada, the effect of this new series of diplomatic maneuvers has been alternating between hope and despair. Certainly there are different views on how - and whether - to continue the present PLO diplomatic strategy of making concessions in the hopes that the «Cairo gate» will open the door to concessions from the US and Israel.

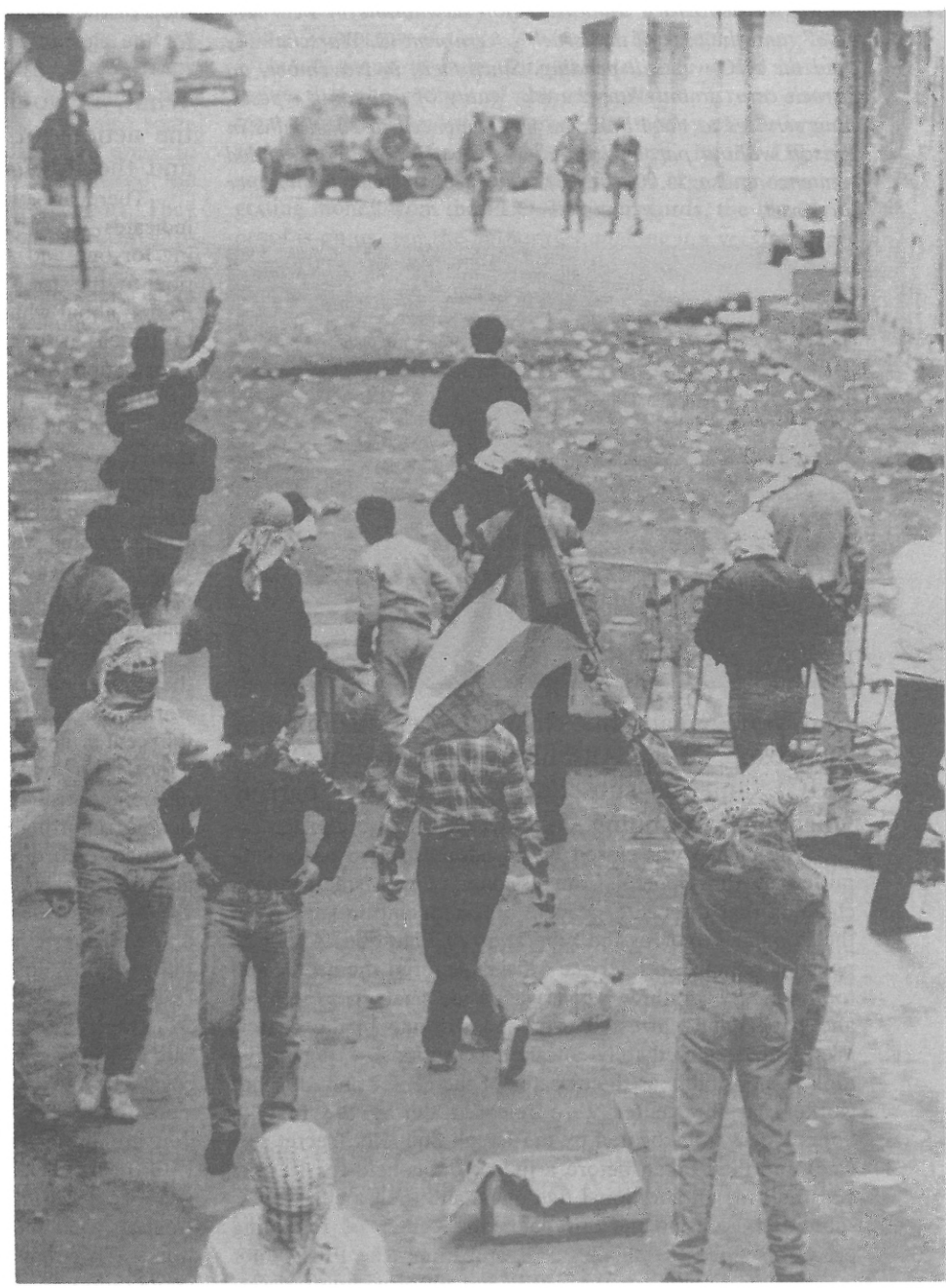
But so far the Shamir, Mubarak and Baker 4, 10 and 5-point plans have gained nothing, and the new stage's challenge continues to be the effort to realize tangible political gains - steps toward an independent state - to make worthwhile the sacrifices of the intifada.

In the new stage, Palestinians must look outside their occupied country to interact with international diplomatic realities - and to ensure that the voice of the intifada remains the central voice articulating the Palestinian reality to the world. But this outward focus is challenged by the virtual absence of the foreign press from occupied Palestine, and the reality that today's intifada cannot rely on the sympathy generated last year by televised coverage of Israeli brutality. That brutality continues, but too often invisibly and the intifada itself now is much harder to see, to quantify, to televise, than the mass demonstrations and community-wide garden projects that characterized the uprising only half a year ago.

The very success of the institutionalization of the uprising brings with it new difficulties and new challenges. At bottom, this phase is one of maintaining and consolidating the gains of the last 27 months in the face of Israel's continued economic and physical assaults. In a fluid process like the Palestinian intifada, of course, it is never enough to simply stand still. Maintaining even the current level of dual power will require a significant expansion of the network of popular committees to villages and other areas where earlier efforts to build branches of the UNL structure were tried and failed, or where no attempt had been made. Strengthening the Palestinian side of the dual power equation will require a return to mass action; new, creative methods must be devised that will allow a reemergence of the broad-based mass character of the early resistance, without repeating the unacceptable high price in casualties from large-scale street confrontations.

This revitalization of mass popular activity is absolutely necessary to prepare the political groundwork for the next, future stage. That period, of national disobedience, will represent the culmination of a long-term effort to prepare the political, cultural, financial and organizational framework for an all-sided disengagement between the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation and the occupation authority itself. Such a break demands a high level of political consciousness, active society-wide mobilization, and careful organizational structures.

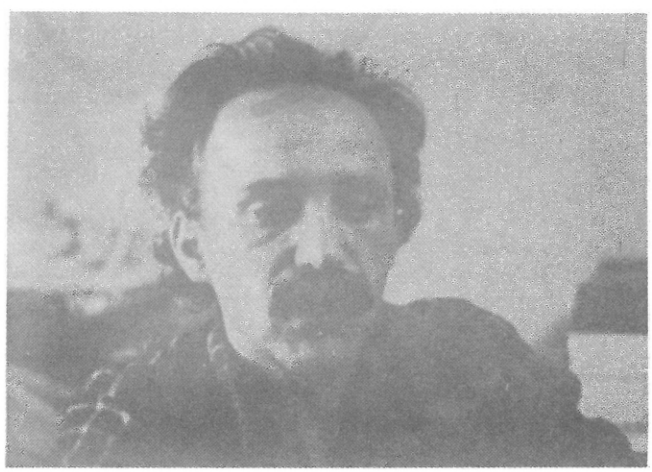
For now, the dual-power period must be viewed as one that will last a relatively long time, and through which the seeds of true national disobedience will be sown and watered. ●



They Were Trying to Stop Israeli-Palestinian Cooperation

Interview with Michel Warschawsky, director of the Alternative Information Center(AIC), Jerusalem.

We interviewed Michel Warschawsky at the Vienna NGO meeting in August-September 1989. The AIC had been closed down by the Israeli authorities for six months in February 1987, and the case of the Israeli government vs. Warschawsky and the AIC was still pending. Since then, in November, an Israeli court found Warschawsky guilty of providing typesetting services to the PFLP; he was sentenced to 20 months in prison without parole, in addition to a 10-month suspended sentence and a $5,000 fine. Today, he is a political prisoner in Israel.



Can you explain the circumstances surrounding the closure of the Alternative Information Center (AIC), and the subsequent court order barring you from continuing your work in the center?

The center was closed by an administrative order submitted by the General Commissioner of the Israeli Police, claiming that the center was an office for and in support of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. About 20 policemen and secret service officials entered the center and took almost everything which was inside: machines, archives and papers, and arrested everyone working in the center. We denied immediately all the accusations. I personally took responsibility as the director of the center and all other workers in the center were released during the first 48 hours. I was interrogated by the Israeli Shin Bet (secret service) and then taken before a judge. I was held for 10 days and then for an additional five days, and then a charge was submitted accusing me and later the center of rendering printing services to an illegal organization - the PFLP - not by printing directly for the PFLP, but by providing typesetting services and printing facilities to women's organizations as well as student organizations which are allegedly linked to the PFLP in the occupied territories. This was the legal basis for the closure of the center.

What, in your opinion, are the reasons behind the actions of the Israeli authorities against you and the AIC?

There are two reasons. The first is that, as our name indicates, we are an information center that has been working for one and a half years, efficiently providing information to the Israeli media, as well as to the international media, about what is taking place in the occupied territories, in Israeli prisons, etc. We have been providing accurate information from statements of political prisoners, reports from inside the prisons, and reports about torture of Palestinian political prisoners, which were quoted by the Zionist media. As one interrogator told me, «What is the meaning of closing down *Al Mithaq* (a Palestinian newspaper in Israel which was closed down by the Israeli authorities in 1986) if you are doing what they were doing?» I replied that we are Israelis and should be protected by Israeli law, while *Al Mithaq* was not. He then said, «If you are working with the Palestinians, then you will be treated like a Palestinian.»

The second point is that the center, when opened, was the first such one where both Israelis and Palestinians worked together. Some of the Palestinians who worked in the center and with the center had spent many years in prison. Our aim was to give true information about what is happening inside Israeli society and Palestinian society from people reporting from their own communities. We are not a center of ordinary journalists. First and foremost we are activists - Israeli activists in the political movements in Israel, and Palestinian activists in their national struggle; and we never tried to hide this. We wanted to put out true information, not «neutral» information about repression, resistance and struggle. For that reason we needed people from both sides, from the Israeli peace movement as well as the Palestinian nationalist movement. My Shin Bet interrogators used to tell me during the long interrogation sessions that, and I quote, «As long as you act among Israelis, you are protected by Israeli democracy. But if you work with them - the Palestinians - there is no democracy because it is occupation, and you will be treated like they are treated; you cannot claim democracy and law under occupation.» What they were trying to do is stop Israeli-Palestinian cooperation.

How long was the AIC closed, and what changes, if any, were made after it reopened?

The center was ordered closed for six months. We then appealed to the district court, but the center was not allowed to reopen before the end of this six-month period. So for six months we were cut off from our center and our equipment. In addition, despite the court orders to return our equipment and our archives, most of our archives were destroyed, and our equipment was in such bad condition we could not use it. This had a big effect on our technical capacity, making it more difficult to renew our budget, our daily work and our publications. We had a daily information bulletin which we sent to press agencies in Israel and abroad by our facsimile machine which we never got back. On the other hand, the closure gave a lot of publicity to the center. In the beginning people were saying that this was not an information center, but a group of terrorists running a spy agency. However, soon after that not only the Israeli left and the progressive sector of Israeli society, but also some mainstream organizations, including the journalists' union in Jerusalem, writers and Knesset members, questioned the allegations against the center, and expressed support. They did not accept the closure of a center which had been providing accurate and important information.

The effects of the closure on work in the center stem from my release by the Supreme Court after one month in prison. One of the conditions of my release was that I would not be allowed to go back to the center as long as the legal procedure was going on, which somehow affected the center. Also, some of the workers were a little bit afraid after the closure and stopped working for our center. But the old team and the new employees decided to go on, whatever may happen, and not to stop doing what we believe is very important, both on the level of providing information and Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. The last thing, the trial itself, is costing a lot of money and time. We have had to allocate an important part of our resources to the trial, which is at the expense of other priorities. But I hope the trial will be over in the near future, and we'll be able to renew all our old projects and start new ones.

Can you explain the new amendment to the anti-terror ordinance?

The prevention of terrorism act makes any kind of contact, support or relations with any kind of Palestinian institution illegal. Under the old articles of this act, anything which could be understood as supporting or expressing solidarity with «terrorist organizations» is prohibited. This broadens the definition of «terrorist organizations» to include any organization which may have a link to the PLO. Like the interrogator from the Shin Bet said at my trial, «Any institution in the occupied territories - cultural, political, social, charity - is PLO.» This means, for example, anyone, whether Palestinian or Israeli, who has any kind of cultural contact with any one of these groups - like going to Al Hakawati theater - can be accused of supporting a terrorist organization. The second amendment which was adopted in 1985-86 prohibits any contacts with Palestinians who are officials of the PLO, even if these are public talks about peace. In fact, four of our friends in the peace movement in Israel are now in jail, condemned to six months for having met a PLO representative at a public meeting in Romania.

Now there is a new amendment, the third one to the prevention of terrorism act, which is trying to outlaw and confiscate the money of any organization that is linked to the PLO or any «terrorist organization.» Although in the past getting money from the PLO or any illegal Palestinian organization would have been illegal, what is new in this amendment is that it can be an administrative measure used by the police, and not a matter to be put to trial. This includes not only money coming directly from the PLO but money coming from any institution in the world where you cannot prove the money was not from a «terrorist organization.» Tomorrow if there is a center that gets money from a church group in Italy, for example, they would have to prove that the money of this organization is not coming from the PLO. And if you prove the money of this organization is coming from another one, say, in the US, the center would have to prove that this US organization is not getting money from the PLO. In other words, the burden of proof is on us, not the authorities, making it a very arbitrary measure. This will cut financing to institutions that need money from any kind of charity organization.

How do the authorities justify closing the AIC within the framework of Israeli democracy?

It is as I told you before, by way of connection. As this interrogator told me, this happens when you are working with the Palestinians, supporting their cause. This has been my political line for 20 years. I've never hidden my support for the Palestinian struggle, nor my solidarity. So, there is a stage at which the authorities say: Okay. The law exists, and it is not written into the law that only Palestinian institutions can be closed, but they can also close the AIC. They hadn't done it until now. This was a political decision to say: You are too close to the Palestinians, so we would have to treat you as we are treating the Palestinians.

We are very angry about the closure, but somehow we are proud to be put together with the Palestinians because we are accused of something we are proud to have done. We say it is not illegal. We express our solidarity and support to the Palestinians in struggle within the limits of the law, because we want to keep our action legal. They say it is not legal. Okay. For that, we will go to trial and we'll see whether we win or not. We want to be legal. We want it in our statutes that we will print material for any progressive organization. We'll not ask who they are, except if there will be a clear law which forces us to do so. Then we'll have to decide what to do, because we want to keep our legality. The principle is to help as much as is legally possible.

What repercussions did closing the center have on Israeli public opinion? You mentioned this, but can you elaborate?

Yes. I want to elaborate because this is a big failure for the authorities, in my opinion. One of the aims of this step ▶

was to warn all the peace forces in Israel, to say: Look, here are the limits; don't cross them. These people went too far. If you want to keep your rights, don't go too far. They also intended to create a situation whereby we must legitimize ourselves daily. They did this by saying: They are extremists, radicals; don't work with them, they are inciters, fake Israelis. In fact, they're Palestinians disguised as Israelis. We say that we're working with Palestinians, but we're Israelis.

All this backfired on the authorities because there is a crisis in Israel. The crisis is one of confidence. And there is not a consensus anymore. Also, because we're based on a certain legitimacy, although we are known as anti-Zionists and radicals, we're accepted today as a component of the peace movement. We're respected because more and more people are realizing that 20 years ago we were alone in shouting: Occupation is bad. More Israelis now say: You were right, occupation is bad. And tomorrow maybe they'll say also Zionism is bad. We have to be patient. So it backfired on the authorities. Instead of isolating us, we had this solidarity and people saying: No, we don't believe the authorities. We know them. Okay. They have radical positions, but they are not terrorists, they are not traitors. They have their positions, and we don't agree with them, but they're playing fair. They have the right to express even these radical positions. So, instead of the authorities cutting us off from the Israeli public, they strengthened our relations with them. In one case, there was an article in one of the major dailies in Israel by a Zionist journalist who made a big joke of the whole incident. He explained that he knew us very well, having used our information which was always accurate. He then wrote: Let's assume that, as the authorities were alleging, the center was financed by George Habash. They said the same thing about *Al Mithaq* and other newspapers, so this is a turning point. George Habash, instead of being a big terrorist, has become the Rupert Murdoch of the Palestinian press. We should welcome such a step.

There are those who say that Israel, perhaps, has the ability now to live with the intifada, therefore rendering it ineffective. What do you think about this?

The idea of living with the intifada is ridiculous. The intifada is, among other things, a war of attrition. You cannot live with a war of attrition. A war of attrition weakens you slowly, but permanently. You can see it everywhere. You cannot take the bus without everyone being afraid that it will be attacked. In the streets, everyone is on guard. There is a situation of insecurity which will grow deeper in the future, I'm sure. Also, the army is being affected. How long can you have reserve soldiers running after kids, making them take down flags from wires and erase slogans from walls? Everyone knows that these actions and stone-throwing are not going to stop. So, there is a deterioration in the situation. People are soldiers and they don't like serving in the occupied territories, but they'll do it once, twice a year, for a year and a half, two years, but they're unhappy as long as they know they'll have to serve there again and again. This is not living with the intifada; no one will accept the idea that we will have to live with the intifada.

Two possibilities are open in Israel and, in fact, the polarization of Israeli society reflects these two possibilities. One is the line which is heading towards a total war against the Palestinian people, including mass expulsion, mass terror until the intifada is crushed by emptying the occupied territories of their inhabitants. But this would mean not only the end of Palestine, but the end of Israel too. This would mean total war with the Arab world. This is it: the apocalypse. Otherwise, you have to make a radical turn. Today we have a substantial minority in Israel which is saying: We don't accept the idea of expulsion and total war, so let's talk. Then you have various answers as to what to say, how to say it, what to talk about, etc. These are the two poles. No one seriously believes that we can live with the new status quo, yet no one believes that we can go back to the situation which existed before 1987. ●

Israeli Women in Black protest the occupation.

Israeli Government Crisis Buying Time

As we go to press, Labor leader Shimon Peres has been granted two more weeks to form a government. So the political maneuvers continue with both Labor and Likud trying to draw the religious parties and other uncommitted factions to their respective sides. Whatever the outcome of this wheeling and dealing, it offers no hope of enhancing the prospects for peace. If Labor is able to form a government, their demagogy about wanting to further the peace process will appear in its true light. Although Labor is more flexible than Likud about cooperating with US diplomacy, it is not prepared to negotiate with the Palestinians on any issues of real substance. Moreover, such a government would most probably be narrowly based and thus reluctant to undertake any decisive moves in relation to the peace process. The other possible outcomes of the current crisis - a new «national unity» government, a Likud-led coalition or new elections - also hold out little hope of anything new, especially since the Israeli electorate still appears almost equally divided between the two major blocs. The only certain result of the current crisis is that the Zionist state can use it to buy time and distract attention from substantial issues, chiefly the intifada and the Palestinian peace initiative. Meanwhile, the Soviet Jewish immigration continues, bolstering Israel's expansionist tendencies.

by Farida Al Asmar

The March 15th fall of the Shamir government was the first time ever an Israeli government has been toppled by a no-confidence vote in the Knesset. It is also the first time an Israeli government has fallen under the impact of the Palestinian question. In the last analysis, the intifada brought on the crisis that precipitated the rift in the coalition government between Labor and Likud. This does not, however, mean that Labor and Likud have taken significantly different positions on the Palestinian cause or the intifada. The no's on which the coalition government has been functioning are still basically intact: No talks with the PLO, no to a Palestinian state and the rights of repatriation and self-determination; Jerusalem's status is non-negotiable, etc.

The real reason Labor and Likud could no longer govern jointly is that they have different approaches to coordinating strategy and tactics with the US, in the common crusade to abort the intifada. Thus, it follows that the current choice on the Israeli political scene is not really a simple choice for or against peace, as some are saying. The crisis came to a head not over substantive issues concerning the peace process, but over how to react to Baker's procedural proposals for starting a Palestinian-Israeli dialogue. Labor ministers resigned on March 13th, when Shamir rejected Peres' demand for a cabinet vote on the Baker plan, and sacked him. Shamir refused the last-minute compromise proposed by Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual mentor of the Shas(Torah Guardians) party, that both government parties accept the US proposals. Instead, Shamir «bravely» walked the plank to his government's demise, continuing the game of buying time to beat down the intifada, which has been Israeli government policy since it began.

The US and Jerusalem

During the first week of March, President Bush and Secretary of State Baker each issued statements that made waves in Israel, even though they did not radically depart from long-standing US policy, or from the obvious demands of furthering the peace process as they understand it. On March 1st, at a congressional hearing, Baker made his support to $400 million in loan guarantees for housing Soviet Jewish immigrants conditional on Israel not spending this money on settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or to free other funds for this purpose. At a March 3rd press conference, Bush said: «We do not believe there should be new settlements in the West Bank or in East Jerusalem» (*International Herald Tribune*, March 10-11th), becoming the first US president to speak publicly against Israeli settlements in Jerusalem.

Within two weeks, both statements had been modified in a way more pleasing to Israel. On March 2nd, State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said that the US would give the loan guarantees if Israel provides assurances about the money's use similar to those provided in connection with the US's $3 billion in annual aid, thus dropping Baker's condition about halting settlements. Bush, for his part, responded to a letter from Teddy Kolleck, the Israeli mayor of Jerusalem, with assurances that «Jerusalem must never again be a divided city»(AP, March 15th), and that negotiations on the final status of the city would be at the later stages of the peace process. There was no mention of the problem of settlements. A White House statement on March 9th, said that Jews have the right to live in all parts of Jerusalem «in the context of a negotiated settlement»(AP,April 1st).

Nonetheless, the Likud began a campaign to rally support for its obstinate stand on the peace process by propagating that the US had broken faith on the issue of Jerusalem. Throughout March, US newspapers were saturated with columns written by American Zionists decrying the Bush Administration's «pressure» on Israel. This culminated in rather wild exaggerations like the contention of William Safire in *The New York Times* that «Bush has long resisted America's special relationship with Israel»(*International Herald Tribune*, March 27th). It also culminated in a US Senate resolution that Jerusalem is Israel's capital - ▶

He may not have threatened Israel's existence, but he helped bring down the government.

a departure from official US policy.

In reality, it was neither the Bush-Baker statements, nor the imagined US pressure that actually brought down the government. Peres had put an ultimatum the last week in February that the government must take steps vis-a-vis the peace process, or else Labor might withdraw. This was as Foreign Minister Arens was in Washington D.C., excusing the Shamir government from making even minor concessions on the composition of a Palestinian delegation, on the grounds of the current political situation.(By this, Arens was mainly referring to the internal problems in the Likud after Sharon challenged Shamir's leadership. Soon afterwards, Economy Minister Modai and four other MK's, all former Liberals, moved to reconstitute themselves as a separate faction, breaking their merger with the Likud and forming the Movement for the Zionist Ideal.)

It is hard to imagine that the Bush Administration intended to provoke the downfall of the Israeli government, but it did hope that Shamir would go along with Baker's efforts to promote the Israeli prime minister's own plan. The Labor Party, for its part, had been ready to cooperate with Baker's tactic of implementing the Shamir plan in a way that would allow Egypt to lure the PLO into authorizing Palestinians from the occupied territories to meet an Israeli delegation.

However, Likud balked on the details, claiming that agreeing to include one or two expelled Palestinians in the delegation was tantamount to talking to the PLO, and would open the way for the right of return for three million Palestinian refugees. Similarly, for Likud, agreeing to meet a Jerusalem resident was seen as tantamount to conceding the city itself. In fact, these were just the most refined of Mr. Baker's tricks to lure the PLO into negating its own role in the peace process and, last but not least, undermine the intifada politically.

The irony of the matter is that Likud and Labor disagree not at all on Jerusalem being the «united and eternal capital of Israel.» If one can imagine a scenario in the future where the US would press for negotiations on the city's final status, the two major Israeli blocs would certainly stand united in defending this principle. In fact, the Likud and Labor positions on the 1967 occupied territories as such are not so different as often intimated. They concur on the necessity of retaining the Syrian Golan Heights. While Likud refuses withdrawal from one inch of the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Labor Party position for eventual withdrawal actually envisions retaining major parts of the West Bank.

New immigration

The situation is somewhat the same regarding the new wave of immigration to Israel of Soviet as well as Ethiopian Jews. Both Likud and Labor are acutely aware that this presents Israel with an historic opportunity to bolster its hold on occupied Palestine, and resolve the demographic balance in favor of Zionism. Almost 10,000 Soviet Jews came to Israel in the first two months of 1990, after which the government slapped military censorship on press reports about immigration. By late March, the Ethiopian government had confirmed that hundreds of Ethiopian Jews had settled in Israel in recent months. Based on estimates of the size of the Jewish community remaining in the Soviet Union and Ethiopia, 1.8 million(in 1979) and 9,000 respectively, the Zionist state has the chance of increasing its Jewish population by one-third if the immigration continues.

Both Likud and Labor are well aware that the US played a crucial role in facilitating the Soviet Jewish immigration, and that its financial aid is pivotal in efforts to absorb the new immigrants. Yet statements by Likud leaders seemed almost designed to provoke an international reaction. Following on his statements about the need for «Greater Israel» to absorb the new immigrants, Shamir also publicly insisted that the government will direct Soviet Jews to settle in Jerusalem, including the eastern part of the city. On March 9th, Housing Minister Levy announced the start of construction of 3,000 apartments for new immigrants in East Jerusalem, declaring that «this decision was meant as defiance» of US President Bush(*International Herald Tribune*, March 15th). In contrast, the Labor Party has not been prone to flashy statements about the new immigration, though it is working equally dilligently to exploit this new opportunity to the maximum. The Labor policy seems based on the premise that if Israel cooperates in the

«peace» efforts, the US will maintain its usual protective silence about Israel creating «facts» on the ground(via the settling of the new immigrants), which undermine the search for a just peace.

Religious influence?

The influence of the religious parties was already strongly felt in the 1988 elections when they gained more Knesset seats, holding the balance between the two big blocs, and also putting forth a series of controversial demands, especially concerning the question of «who is a Jew.» If anything, the religious forces are even more prominent in the current governmental crisis, but their role has taken on a slightly different tone. The nascent tendency among some of these parties to realize that Jewish security and well-being may not be compatible with territorial expansionism has become more pronounced. This tendency was most clearly represented by Rabbi Yosef of Shas, the largest ultraorthodox party, and composed of Sephardic Jews, which held the immigration and interior ministeries in the Shamir government. In technical terms, it was Shas that toppled the government when five of its six MK's abstained after Shamir balked at Rabbi Yosef's compromise. The rabbi went on record as saying that Shamir's policy «invited bloodshed and war upon Israel.» In the ensuing political consultations, Shas Rabbi Arieh Deri said that the party was not asking for special demands, but wanted to «do everything we can to advance the peace process»(*International Herald Tribune*, March 17-18th). A poll published by *Maariv* in late March showed that 53.1% of the Israeli public supported Rabbi Yosef's principle that peace must be the deciding factor in forming a new government.

However, there was also a backlash among the religious forces. Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz resigned as head of the Shas Knesset group, protesting his party fellows' abstention that caused Shamir's downfall. Rabbi Yosef was sharply criticized by both of Israel's chief rabbis(Sephardi and Ashkenazi) for his statement against Shamir's policy. Rabbi Schach, Shas's other spiritual mentor, worked to stop

100,000 Israelis demonstrated for electoral reform on April 7th, the biggest demonstration in Israel since the protest against the Sabra-Shatila massacre.

the party's drift toward Labor. His March 26th speech, a key event in the congress of another ultraorthodox party, Degel Hatorah (Torah Flag), directly attacked Labor and the kibbutzim for having distanced themselves from Judaism. However, he also noted that «territory doesn't guarantee existence.»

In the political consultations aimed at forming a new government, both Likud and Labor are, as usual, trying to woo the religious parties to their side. In the midst of the political crisis, the Knesset approved the budget for the fiscal year 1990-91. Of the total $31.2 billion budget adopted, $100 million was approved for settlement-building, while $110 million was allocated to religious institutions - a point on which both Likud and Labor MK's concurred. This gives the religious institutions over two times the budget allocations they received last year, and again raises the questions of whether the orthodox parties hold disproportional power when compared to the fact that the great majority of Israelis are non-religious.

One should not overlook, however, that the influence of the religious parties is built into the Israeli political structure. Zionism needs Judaism, for without it Israel stands naked as the colonial state it is. Thus, making a pretense of deferring to the religious forces is necessary for garnering support domestically and internationally. It is no accident that the role of the religious forces becomes even more prominent when the society is in crisis. So far, the intifada has deepened the polarization in Israeli society, but without yet inducing a clear consensus in either direction, though the movement towards right-wing extremism appears stronger than left-leaning tendencies. Generally, the Israeli public is split 50-50 on crucial issues concerning the occupied territories like withdrawal, annexation, mass expulsion of Palestinians, etc. In this paralysis of the settler state, the religious forces may very well hold the balance, with a myriad of secondary questions distracting Israel from the existential questions it is loath to face up to.

The happy caretaker

More basic than the distractions offered by the religious forces is the chance for Israeli leaders of all factions to use the current political crisis to distract the international community's attention from the peace process and Israeli efforts to block this. On the domestic scene, the crisis serves to deflect criticism from the left and the right of the government's failures, including its failure to quell the Palestinian intifada. One might even argue that Shamir and the Likud generally are delighted with their role as a caretaker government. The US is treating Israel with kid gloves, and a series of questions are postponed until the formation of a new government.

Likud is certainly taking advantage of the breathing spell. Within two weeks of his government's fall, caretaker Shamir who is doubling as defense minister after Rabin's resignation, has set in motion plans for quickly starting five more settlements in the 1967 occupied territories. These five settlements were among the eight decided on by the coalition government in 1988, but reportedly postponed by Rabin in his capacity as defense minister due to US protests. The other three of the original eight have already been opened: Ofarim and Tsoref in the West Bank and Kfar Darom in the Gaza Strip(AP, April 1st). Clearly, as long as the government crisis persists, Shamir and his deputies will be working according to the watchwords: Buy time - and colonize! ●

by Ahmad Halaweh

Zionist Im

in Historical

Forty-two years have passed since the creation of the State of Israel, the dismembering of Palestine, and the uprooting of the Palestinian people from their homeland. The reasons why Israel exists today, and why the majority of the Arab people of Palestine are refugees, date back a century ago. The crucial factor, no doubt, was the unholy alliance between British imperialism and the Zionists, aimed at opening Palestine to successive waves of Jewish immigrants. Describing the time of the British mandate, historian Arnold Toynbee wrote in 1968: «All through those 30 years (1918-48), Britain admitted into Palestine, year by year, a quota of Jewish immigrants that varied according to the strength of the respective pressures of the Arabs and the Jews at the time. These immigrants could not have come in, if they had not been shielded by a British *cheveux-de-frise*. If Palestine had remained under Ottoman rule or if it had become an independent Arab state in 1918, Jewish immigrants would never have been admitted into Palestine in large enough numbers to enable them to overwhelm the Palestinian Arabs in this Arab people's own country»(quoted by Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, *Palestine and the United Nations*, 1982, p.18).

After these 30 years of massive Jewish immigration, Israel was established in 1948, and the Palestinian people were driven into exile. The result was the tragedy of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict and its essence, the Palestinian question.

Understanding Israel's current policy of settling new immigrants in the occupied territories cannot be separated from its historical background. With the advent of the 1990's, the Zionist challenge has assumed a new aggressive dimension, as evidenced by Shamir's recent statements, clearly indicating Israel's determination to continue to challenge the international community and proceed with plans aimed at annexation of all the occupied Palestinian land. This study will look into the past to analyze Zionist immigration historically. One finds that the Israeli leaders of today have not given up the dream of «Greater Israel.» Israel is still guided by the thinking of the original leaders of the World Zionist Organization(WZO), and it is still Zionist ideology that governs Israeli policy.

The immigration drive

Originally, Jewish immigration to Palestine was based on individual efforts, and did not produce decisive results. The foundation of the WZO at the first Zionist Congress in 1897 was a turning point in terms of immigration policy. From that time, immigration was intensified by the WZO to create a new status quo in Palestine. In 1914, Chaim Weizmann, Zionism's foremost diplomat, said in a speech in London, «Before transforming Palestine into a Jewish state, we are in great need of finding the Jews who should settle there»(quoted by Georgi Kanaan, *The Collapse of the Israeli Empire*, 1982, [Arabic], p.112). The obsession with immigration became a Zionist doctrine. From its very inception, the Zionist movement, as a settler-colonial movement, mounted a large-scale propaganda campaign to convince as many Jews as possible to settle in Palestine. Aiming to encourage the sentiment for immigration among the Jewish masses, Weizmann told Rumanian Jews in 1928 that if they were «convinced of our rights in the land of Israel, you have to come to Palestine» (quoted by Kanaan, p.112).

Despite all their efforts, the Zionists might not have succeeded if not for the fascist terror which arose in Europe, and the decision of most Western countries to close their doors to Jewish refugees. As explained by Ghassan Kanafani in his study of the 1936-39 revolt in Palestine: «From 1926 to 1932 the average number of immigrants per year was 7,201. It rose to 42,985 between 1933 and 1936, as a direct result of Nazi persecution in Germany...If Nazism was responsible for terrorising the Jews and forcing them out of Germany, it was 'democratic' capitalism in collaboration with the Zionist movement, that was resposible for directing comparatively large numbers of Jewish immigrants to Palestine...»

When Israel was declared in May 1948, the new state, along with the WZO, proceeded to pursue their main goal of importing Jews from all over the world. Based on the idea that Jews had been forcibly exiled from their land, Israel demanded the liquidation of the diaspora, through the immigration of all Jews to the «Promised Land.» To attain «Jewish national rebirth,» the Israeli founding declaration pointed out: «The State of Israel will be open for Jewish immigration and for the ingathering of the exiles...» and appealed to «the Jewish people throughout the Diaspora to rally around the Jews of Eretz Istael in the tasks of immigration and upbuilding, and to stand by them in the great struggle for the realization of the age-old dream - the redemption of Israel»(T.G. Fraser, *The Middle East, 1914-1979*, 1980, pp.66-68).

According to Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, «The existence of Israel and its final victory depend on. guaranteeing one important factor which is extensive Jewish immigration to Israel... A fateful question... because military force alone is unable to secure the future of Israel. Therefore, bringing hundreds of thousands of Jews to Israel

migration

Perspective

has to be the basic task of Israel and Zionism»(quoted by Kanaan, pp.115-6). Desperately seeking more immigration, Ben Gurion told a cabinet meeting on August 15th, 1948: «Generations have not suffered and struggled to see only 800,000 Jews in this country. It is the duty of the present generation to redeem the Jews in Arab and European countries»(quoted by Alfred M. Lilienthal, *What Price Israel?*, 1969, p.197).

In August 1949, Ben Gurion said to a group of US Zionists visiting Israel: «Although we realized our dream of establishing a Jewish State, we are still at the beginning. Today, there are only 900,000 Jews in Israel, while the greater part of the Jewish people are still abroad. It consists of bringing all Jews to Israel»(quoted by Lilienthal, p.191). To the Zionists, this meant forcing Jews to come to Israel by any means. In this vein, an editorial in *Davar*, the newspaper of the governing Mapai party (Labor), stated:«I shall not be ashamed to confess that, if I had power, as I have the will, I would select a score of efficient young men - intelligent, decent, devoted to our ideal and burning with the desire to help redeem Jews, and I would send them to the countries where Jews are absorbed in sinful self-satisfaction. The task of these young men would be to disguise themselves as non-Jews and, acting upon the brutal Zionism, *plague* these Jews with anti-Semitic slogans such as 'Bloody Jews,' 'Jews go to Palestine,' and similar 'intimacies.' I can vouch that the results, in terms of a considerable immigration to Israel from these countries, would be ten thousand times larger than the results brought by thousands of emissaries who have been preaching for decades to deaf ears»(quoted by Lilienthal, pp.207-8).

In fact, Zionist leaders spared no efforts to achieve the liquidation of the diaspora, sometimes by propaganda about a better future for those who come to Israel, at times by terrorist acts for those who refused. Submitting a report to the Zionist-controlled American Jewish Conference about how to deal with Jews who refuse to immigrate to Palestine, Chaplain Klausner said: «I am convinced that the people must be forced to go to Palestine. They are not prepared to understand their own position nor the promises of the future. To them, an American dollar looms as the greatest of objectives. By 'force' I suggest a program. It is not a new program. It was used before, and most recently. It was used in the evacuation of the Jews from Poland and in the story of the 'Exodus'»(quoted by Lilienthal, p.194).

Having failed to secure massive immigration of Ashkenazi Jews from Europe and America, the Zionist movement began to exert heavy pressure, including force, on Jews living in Arab countries. In Baghdad, Zionist agents planted bombs in coffee houses and bookshops to force the reluctant Iraqi Jews to emigrate. In June 1953, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tewfiq Sweidi told Alfred Lilienthal: «At the end of the first 11 months only 30,000 (Jews) had registered for emigration. One of the buses carrying Jews to the airport was bombed - Zionists were accused of this act - and within two months more than 80,000 had expressed a desire to depart»(Lilienthal, p.199). Ilan Halevi writes: «between 1948 and 1967, one million 'Arab Jews' came from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon to Palestine,» as a result of the Zionist campaign(*A History of the Jews, Ancient and Modern*, 1987, p.197).

Soviet Jewish immigrants outside their West Bank settlement

Zionist settlers march in the occupied West Bank.

Immigration limitations

After the influx of Arab Jews, which occurred mainly in the fifties, Zionist immigration began to stagnate. In spite of their appeals, Zionists were unable to fulfill their aim of «ingathering all Jews;» only a fraction of Jews in the world chose to live in Israel. True, there was an upsurge of immigration after the Israeli victory in the 1967 war, but it soon began to decline due to a number of factors, in particular after the 1973 war. In the context of the general unwillingness of Jews living in Western countries to immigrate to Israel, much of the subsequent discussion of immigration has▶

focused on Soviet Jews. At the same time, a significant number of Israelis began to emigrate. This terrified Israeli leaders. Official statements show the extent of the Zionists' fear of this phenomenon, while also revealing some of the reasons behind the problem. As was written in *Davar*, August 10th, 1973: «We are facing a very dangerous matter. The number of Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel is declining. And that of those emigrating from Israel is increasing. It is happenning in a disturbing way.»

It appeared that most Jews had lost interest in immigrating to Israel. At the same time, for many of those who did settle there, the so-called land of milk and honey no longer satisfied their aspirations, and many new immigrants discovered that the promise of a better life was nothing but a lie. Minister of Immigrant Absorption Shlemo Razon noted: «The decline in immigration resulted from the possibility of new wars erupting, the lack of a feeling of security and economic difficulties... 4,000 Soviet Jews have obtained permission to emigrate from the Soviet Union in the last year(1974), but they went to the US, not to Israel»(quoted by Kanaan, p.133). With the lessened interest in immigration, the preference for other relocation places and accumulating problems in Israel, the emigration of Jews from Israel began to exceed immigration by the late seventies and early eighties.

If many Zionist leaders cited economic difficulties and insecurity as reasons for tipping the immigration-emigration ratio, World Jewish Congress and WZO President Nahum Goldman viewed that the main reason was to be found within Zionism and its concepts. He proposed a renewal of Zionism: «If we add human meanings to the national concept, and if we have the ability to convince a Jew that here we are establishing a civilization and new society with deep meaning and values for the human being at large, then it is possible to have this Jew in Israel»(Kanaan, p.151).

Goldman's words indirectly confirmed that Jews were becoming less fervent in their belief in the Zionist cause, at least in terms of deciding to settle in Israel. As the American author Roberta Feuerlicht wrote: «If Zionism is a national liberation movement, many Jews do not wish to be liberated; 75 per cent of the world Jewish population do not live in Israel... The Jewish population of Israel is actually shrinking»(Yuri Andreyev, *Zionism: Preaching and Practice*, 1988, p.17).

An article in *Maariv*, December 1st, 1978, cited another factor which is connected to both the concern of Goldman about lacking conviction in Zionism, and the economic factor: «The majority of Soviet Jews who are leaving the Soviet Union are not Zionist idealists. They are only concerned with improving their living standard... To them, Israel is a theocratic state... They believe that Israel cannot exist without the US, so it is better for them to go directly there(the US).»

All these statements challenge the Zionist myths of the «unity of the Jewish people» and «return to the fatherland.» The majority of Jews in the world have actually assimilated into the society of their own country; thus they lack the common characteristics of a people or nation. This fact of assimilation has often been noted in Israeli leaders' statements, and they consider it as one of the greatest dangers facing Israel and Zionism, due to the role it plays in hindering immigration. «Assimilation is the greatest danger facing Jews of the diaspora,» said Levi Eshkol, Israeli prime minister in the sixties. «In the Western countries, the Jewish identity is going to disappear through assimilation»(quoted by Kanaan, p.156).

A basic fact which Zionist leaders try to gloss over is the lack of homogeneity in Israeli society itself. Being immigrants from different parts of the world, each group has its own traditions, language, cultural background and beliefs. This has caused many contradictions among Jews in Israel, as social and ethnic differences overlap with class divisions, as is most apparent in the differences between Ashkenazi and Oriental(or Arab) Jews. Ilan Halevi cites a telling incident in his book: «In 1972, a group of new immigrants from the USSR demonstrated at Nevi Sharett, in the suburbs of Tel Aviv, to protest against being housed right next to a Yemenite Jewish quarter. 'We did not come from the USSR,' they said, 'to live with Blacks!'»(p.225).

Immigration and expansion

It is necessary to understand the dangers Zionist immigration poses, as it is an undisputed fact that the greatest threat to peace in the Middle East stems from Zionist expansionism which is only fueled by immigration. This expansionism has been practiced since the emergence of the Zionist movement and current developments show that today's Israeli leaders have not and will not give up their expansionist plans. The State of Israel as recognized by the UN is not enough for the Zionists. Their ultimate objective is «Greater Israel» - optimally with frontiers extending from the Nile to the Euphrates. Any modifications of this goal are due to limitations imposed by concrete realities, not lack of ambition.

The dialectics between immigration and expansion have been continuously reiterated by Zionist leaders. Herzl was the first to express this dialectical relation; when asked by the imperial counsellor of Germany about the borders of the land needed for a Jewish state, he said: «Whenever the number of immigrants increases, our need for land increases»(quoted by Kanaan, p.127). Herzl was fully aware that the 'ingathering' of Jews from all over the world was a prerequisite for establishing the Zionist state. His colleague, the French Zionist Max Nordau, called for immediate practical steps to ensure a Jewish majority in Palestine, and proposed a solution to the «Jewish problem» via «large-scale immigration of Jewish youth to Palestine aiming at colonizing the fatherland»(quoted by Kanaan, p.112). In 1899, the German Zionist Davis Trich, wrote to Theodor Herzl saying: «Since it is beyond your ability to gather 10 million Jews in a piece of land not more than 25,000 square kilometers, I suggest you to take interest in the program of 'Greater Palestine' or 'Palestine and the neighboring countries'.» Since the Zionist movement was seeking to establish a «national home for all the Jewish people,» Trich called for amending the Zionist program whereby its aim would be specified as the «colonization of Palestine and the neighboring countries»(quoted by Kanaan, p.16).

Most recently, Prime Minister Shamir made the link between a big immigration and the need for more land for

settlement. He is a consistent, long-term advocate of «Greater Israel,» meaning at a minimum that the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights be included in the Zionist state. In his words: «For a large immigration we need the land of Israel, a large and strong Israel. We will need a lot of place to absorb everybody»(Associated Press, January 16th). His statement represents the very essence of Zionism and its expansionist strategy.

Israeli leaders have consistently considered Israel a country without borders, and in fact its borders have been defined by aggression, war and occupation, rather than by internationally acceptable geographical boundaries. In 1937, in the name of «historical rights over the whole of the territory,» the majority of delegates to the World Congress of the Workers of Zion, in Zurich, rejected the partition of Palestine as had been proposed by the Peel Commission, as it didn't allot sufficient land for Zionist ambitions. At this congress, Golda Meyerson(later Meir), who became Israeli prime minister in 1969, said: «War alone can change borders. Perhaps there will be a war in the near future»(quoted by Halevi, p.188).

Ten years later, Zionist leaders initially rejected the UN General Assembly resolution 181 of November 1947, which called for partitioning Palestine into two seperate states - one Jewish and one Arab state. The drive for more land was one of the main reasons for their rejection. The records of the UNO *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Palestinian Question(October 1947) give some idea of the Zionist movement's conditions for accepting the partition plan. Rabbi Abba Hillel, Jewish Agency representative at the fourth meeting of the committee, emphasized the following requirements: «an immediate influx of immigrants, which would be possible only in a Jewish State... a Jewish State must have in its own hands those instruments of financing and economic control necessary to carry out large-scale Jewish immigration and the related economic development...»(Fraser, p.53).

Though the Zionists tactically accepted the UN partition resolution, no. 181, they immediately set out to torpedo it in the field. While the Palestinians protested the division of their country, the Zionists embarked on their military plan to enlarge the territory allotted for their state, expanding into the areas designated for an Arab state. Accordingly, in May 1948, the lines had already changed and the State of Israel was established. Israeli objectives vis-a-vis the 1967 occupied territories stem from this same strategy practiced with the original occupation of Palestine in 1948.

Aiming to make the new occupation a *fait accompli*, Israeli leaders have continually tried to get more Jews to immigrate to Palestine, for this would play a decisive role in shaping the Israeli annexation policy by tightening their grip on the occupied territories. Five weeks after the June 1967 war, Moshe Dayan, then defense minister, declared: «The settlements established in the (occupied) territories are there forever and the future frontiers will include these settlements as part of Israel»(The Arab League, *Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Arab Territories*, 1985, p.346). «It is not enough to occupy land,» said Abba Eban, foreign minister at that time, «but it should be settled»(*Davar*, September 11th, 1967). Immigration, coupled with settlement, is also part of the Zionist strategy of establishing Israel as a regional power which could control the area as a whole, and expand according to its ambitions.

On September 24th, 1967, Yitzhak Rabin represented Israel at the European Zionist Council's conference in Basel, where he stated: «The main task of the Zionist movement is to find new methods aimed to get more immigrants. When the population of Israel reaches four or five million Jews, nothing will be able to frighten it or to question its existence»(*Jerusalem Post*, September 25th, 1967). In this view, securing Israel's power via more immigration means enabling it not only to retain the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights but to expand further. This unending process of expansion was clearly spelled out by Moshe Dayan to a group of US Jewish students visiting the Golan Heights in 1968, when he said that the creation of the Zionist state was «a process of building up, of expansion, of getting more Jews and settlements and of colonization, in order to expand the borders here... Let there be no Jew who says that we are near the end of the road»(*Maariv*, July 7th, 1968). Another leading Zionist was quoted in *The New York Times*, August 31st, 1975, as saying: «Israel is a country without borders... The people feel that by coming here they have made this border.»

The vital issue, then, is the overall growth of Israel as a regional power able to change the situation at will, including its own borders. «In five years we won't be able to recognize this country,» said Shamir. «Everything will change, everything will be bigger, stronger»(*Time*, February 12th, 1990). Such recent statements by the Israeli prime minister have been encouraged by the new influx of the Soviet Jews. The massive immigration of Soviet Jews to Palestine is aimed at changing the political, military, economic, geographic and demographic constellation in the region. Strengthening Israel militarily and economically will increase the threat it poses to the Palestinian people and to the Arab states' sovereignty. One of the main results will be a new drive to annex the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, with future expansion to be expected at the expense of neighboring countries, aimed at realizing the dream of «Greater Israel.» The massive new immigration also inevitably involves the displacement of more Palestinians, as well as increased repression and other means of pressuring them to emigrate.

The «transfer» idea

To encourage Jewish immigration to Palestine, the Zionist leaders emphasized Israel Zangwill's famous slogan: «A land without a people for a people without a land.» In addition to denying the existence of the Palestinian people, they claimed Palestine as the «historic land of Israel,» justifying the alleged right of Jews to settle there and establish their state. The aftermath of this great lie was extensive immigration and the establishment of Israel. However, many of the immigrants were to realize that they had been misled by the Zionist movement in terms of the land being uninhabited. The Zionist leaders, for their part, were from the start aware of the deception.

In an article written in 1893, «Truth about the Land of Israel,» Asher Ginsberg, leader of the Lovers of Zion, who ▶

took the name Ahad Haam, meaning «one of the people,» said: «We are accustomed to believe, outside Israel, that the land of Israel is today almost entirely desert, bare and uncultivated, and that anyone who wants to buy land there can do so without hindrance. But the truth is quite different... We are accustomed to believing, outside Israel, that the Arabs are all desert savages, a people like donkeys, and that they neither see nor understand what is happening around them. But that is a great mistake»(quoted by Halevi, pp.168-9).

In 1914, in a lecture delivered in Paris, Chaim Weizmann declared: «In its initial stages, Zionism was conceived by the pioneers as a movement completely dependent on mechanical factors: there is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and, on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people who have no country...»(quoted by Halevi, p.170).

Based on this myth, the Zionist movement worked to enforce a Jewish majority in Palestine, enabling them to establish their state. However, the Arab people of Palestine proved to be the greatest obstacle facing the Zionist project. The main question faced by the Zionists was how to deal with the Palestinians. Their answer was expelling the native inhabitants of Palestine, to be replaced by Jewish immigrants, laying the basis for the «transfer» policy which gained renewed currency in the 1980's. As Theodor Herzl put it in 1897: «We shall encourage the poverty-stricken population to cross the border by securing work for it in the countries it passes through, while denying it any work in our own country. The twin process of expropriation and displacement of the poor must be carried out prudently and discreetly. Let the landowners imagine that they are cheating us, and sell us their land at exorbitant prices. We shall sell nothing back to them»(quoted by Halevi, p.186). Faced with the Palestinians' refusal to sell their land, the violent nature of the «transfer» idea was to become obvious.

Soon after the Balfour Declaration was issued in 1917, the demographic transformation of Palestine began with large-scale Jewish immigration organized by the Zionist movement. As a result, the Jewish population in Palestine increased from 11 per cent in 1922, to 28 per cent in 1936. Yet Palestinians continued to be the majority, despite some of them being deprived of their land by the colonization drive. Expulsion became a main concern of the Zionist movement. In the 1937 Zurich Congress of the Mapai Party and its supporters, «transfer» occupied the first basic priority in the programs of the Zionist movement. Israel Shahak, president of the Israeli League for Human Rights, says: «It was then that the 'transfer' became policy, planned and supported by most of the highest-ranking leaders and opposed on moral grounds by none»(*Journal of Palestine Studies*, 71, Spring 1989).

Despite unanimity on the morality of «transfer,» the participants in the congress responded in different ways to questions about the future of the Palestinians. Commenting on the Peel Commission's partition proposal, Ben Gurion said, «Despite the smallness of the territory offered to the Jewish state, there exists in the commission's proposals the possibility of transferring the Arab population, with their consent, if not by force, and thus extending Jewish colonization... until now, we have only been able to settle by transferring populations from place to place... There are only very few places where we have been able to colonize without being forced to transfer the inhabitants»(quoted by Halevi, p.186).

A. Cizling, leader of Mapam and a government minister in 1948, viewed «transfer» as «an exchange of population between a united Jewish Land of Israel, sometime in the future, and Iraq and other distant Arab countries, including the transfer of their Jews to the Land of Israel»(*Journal of Palestine Studies*, 71).

In the opinion of Berl Katznelson, transfer was «the best of all solutions,» but he opposed what he feared Ben Gurion meant, i.e., that transfer was to be within Palestine. Katznelson who was called «the conscience of Labor Zionism,» believed that the Palestinians «were destined to be transferred to Syria and Iraq,» because «a remote neighbor is better than a close enemy»(op. cit.).

For all of them, «transfer» was a moral act and not unjust. One delegate to the Zurich conference, Abraham Lulu, described it as «a logical and just program, moral and humane in every sense... If we deny ourselves this right to transfer, we condemn all that we have so far accomplished»(quoted by Halevi, p.188).

Yossef Weitz who was appointed head of the Jewish National Fund's colonization department in 1932, was obsessed by the idea of «transfer.» Hoping to see an Israel devoid of Palestinians, he wrote in his diary, December 19th, 1940: «There is no room for both peoples in this small country. If the Arabs leave the country, it will be wide open for us. And if the Arabs stay, the country will remain narrow and miserable... There is no compromise on this point!... That must come all at once, in the manner of Redemption, and there is no way besides transferring the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, to transfer them all... We must not leave a single village, not a single tribe... And only with such a transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brothers, and the Jewish question will be solved once and for all. There is no other way out»(*Journal of Palestine Studies*, 71).

Transfer in practice

With the creation of Israel, 800,000 Palestinians were forced out of their homeland. Only a small number of them remained under Israeli rule. In the aftermath, the Israeli leadership encouraged the exodus of more Palestinians under a variety of pretexts. Most important, however, they had attained the power and authority to adopt «transfer» as an official policy. An IDF Intelligence Branch report from June 30th, 1948, which came to light in the mid-eighties, surmises that «more than 70% of the Arab exodus from Palestine by June 1948 was caused by Jewish military attacks»(*Jerusalem Post*, March 2nd, 1986). One of the many examples of how the Zionists implemented the transfer policy was the destruction of Haifa. After viewing the ruins of the Palestinian city, emptied of its inhabitants, Ben Gurion commented, «What happenned in Haifa can happen in other parts of the country if we will hold out... there will be great changes in the country, and great changes in the composition of the population of the country.» Ben Gurion

saw nothing immoral about «transfer,» but stated: «We have to state the principle of compulsory transfer without insisting on its immediate implementation»(*Journal of Palestine Studies*,64,Summer 1987). In August 1948, he created a transfer committee which submitted a proposal that Arabs should not constitute more than 15 per cent of Israel's total population. The Zionist quest for a Jewish state makes attempts to «transfer» Palestinians inevitable, all the while places are prepared for new immigrants.

The testimony of Joseph Schechtman, an expert on population transfer, leaves no doubt about the age-old Zionist policy of displacement: «It is difficult to overestimate the tremendous role this lot of abandoned Arab property has played in the settlement of hundreds of thousands of Jewish immigrants who have reached Israel since the proclamation of the State in May 1948... The existence of these Arab houses - vacant and ready for occupation - has, to a large extent, solved the greatest immediate problem which faced the Israeli authorities in the absorption of immigrants...»(*Journal of Palestine Studies*, 64, Summer 1987).

Transfer and demographic change

The Zionist policy of demographic transformation did not stop with the 1948 Palestinian exodus, but continued with the Israeli aggression and occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the rest of historical Palestine, in 1967. This caused the exodus of 425,000 more Palestinians, and brought another 750,000 Palestinians under Israeli military rule. The increased number of Palestinians living under occupation, coupled with the high Palestinian birth rate as compared to that of Israeli Jews, has aggravated the danger of the Palestinian presence in the Zionists' eyes. The demographic issue is a nightmare for Israeli strategists, and has been termed a «time bomb.» An editor of *Maariv*, October 29th, 1967, described the Palestinian birth rate as a «danger against which society must defend itself by all means... We must act.» Such statements also illustrate the extreme racism that is inherent in Zionism.

Golda Meir was famous for saying, in the mid-seventies, that she could hardly sleep at night for worrying about how many Arab babies might have been born that night. All Israeli leaders have hoped a large number of Palestinians would eventually leave the occupied territories, and they differ only in the degree to which they openly advocate that the state should facilitate this process. For many years, the only Zionists who advocated withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories did so on demographic grounds. For example, after the 1967 war, Yitzhak Ben Aharon, secretary-general of the Histadrut, advocated restoring the occupied territories to the Arabs, even without a peace treaty, because they are «a bomb under the Jewish character of the state»(quoted by Halevi,p.190).

The «transfer» option gained new ground in the eighties with the further shift to the right on the Israeli political scene. A number of ultra-right parties openly advocate transfer, such as Tehiya whose Knesset representative, Geuleh Cohen, declared the party's establishment of a fund to «assist Arab in emigrating,» as one of many efforts aimed at attaining «Greater Israel.» The best representative of this fascist, terrorist trend is the KACH movement, the logical extension of Zionist ideology. Its leader, Rabbi Meir Kahane, often says what the mainstream Israeli leadership is thinking, but reluctant to say aloud. In Kahane's view, the Palestinians have to leave, but if they insist on staying in their homes, despite all the oppression, they will be forcibly expelled by state and settler-organized terrorism. As the German fascists did with the Jews, he insists on the expulsion of all Palestinians as a «final solution» for the demographic problem and the Palestinian question. In his words: «The (Palestinians) who refuse to live as resident strangers (and they must be limited to a specific number that does not endanger the state) must be given a choice of leaving willingly with full compensation for their property or being compelled to leave without compensation»(*Al Fajr*, English edition, September 23rd, 1983).

Meir Cohen, when he was deputy speaker of the Knesset, blamed the Israeli army for leaving Palestinians on their land. On March 17th, 1983, he told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee: «We had the means in 1967 to make sure that two or three hundred thousand would move to the other side as was done in Lydda, Ramle and Galilee in 1948, but we made a calamitous mistake. Things would have been simpler today: no Palestine problem, no stones, no demonstrations. We could have brought in 100,000 settlers and there would have been no trouble»(*Al Fajr*, March 25th, 1983). Zvi Shiloah, of the Tehiya Party, who entered the Knesset in 1984, has this to say about «transfer»: «I advocate transfer. The difference between Meir Kahane and myself is that I am speaking of a transfer with Arab and international agreement... Under normal conditions expulsion is not feasible, so Kahane's call to expel the Arabs isn't practical. A transfer isn't such a terrible thing. After all, how far is Nazareth from Damascus?... If, for example, the Jordan River bridges were to be closed, I am sure the process of emptying the West Bank would be immeasurably speeded up. The Arabs of Israel? There we have a knotty problem. Perhaps things could be left to develop naturally until matters reach a point of confrontation where it would no longer be worth their while to stay on»(The Arab League, *op. cit.*, p.205).

From Shiloah's point of view, it is the need to maintain the Jewish character of the state which necessitates transfer, and this is a goal on which the entire Zionist leadership concurs. It is no accident that the year of the intifada, 1987, was also the year of the birth of a new party in Israel, Moledet, whose main raison d'etre is openly advocating transfer. Moledet gained two Knesset seats in 1988.

As a result of 42 years of organized expulsion and creeping annexation, Israel has today succeeded in fulfilling the most important element of «Greater Israel.» The new influx of immigrants is now being used not only to force more Palestinians out of their land, but also to strengthen Israel for further aggression and expansion. The new immigration supports the drive of Likud and the ultra-right to enact a mass expulsion of Palestinians into Jordan and mitigates for a new war. «We may have to invade Jordan,» said Geuleh Cohen. «We will come to Amman not as strangers... After all, as everyone knows, we really own Jordan»(The Arab League, *op. cit.*, p.204). ●

Jordan

The Parliament and the National Movement

In late February, Lina Al Aswad of *Democratic Palestine* had the opportunity to interview Theeb Marjeh, a progressive Jordanian MP.

What exactly is the role of the parliament today, and is it what you've hoped for?

The parliament is exercising its role in legislation and supervision of the government. At this stage, in my opinion, the parliament is searching for ways to involve the masses in Jordan in the decision-making process. For example, we publicize in the media that the parliament is planning to discuss a certain issue in order to encourage all concerned people to write their opinions, whether in the papers or directly to us. The parliament also invites experts in different areas to give their opinion about the issues being discussed. Of course, we realize that through this process the popular representation within the parliament remains incomplete, because not all the masses are educated and aware. Therefore, the country needs the mobilization drive that is taking place nowadays. The different student and trade unions and other mass organizations, such as the women's union, are currently engaged in this process. In addition, the Writers' League was recently revived. I feel that this process is an important one in order to shape a strong public opinion that will eventually influence the parliament's decisions.

In your view, will this experience continue, or will it be aborted as happenned with Nabulsi's government in 1956?

The situation in Jordan, in the Arab world and internationally is different today. Therefore, I believe that this experience will and should continue. Our main task right now is to do everything possible in order to consolidate this experience. We must work to make all citizens realize that it is in their interest. When we reach this stage, we will reach the point of no return.

Regionally, we believe that Israel and the Arab regimes, that fear the spread of democracy to their countries, were put at a disadvantage by the recent elections. In your view, who are the domestic forces that were put at a disadvantage?

Some of the candidates who represented certain social strata and interest groups, but weren't elected, were definitely harmed by the experience. There are also some tendencies in the ruling alliance who, due to the revival of parliamentary life, have lost their influence and control. I believe, however, that some of the tendencies within the ruling alliance, who may have partially lost influence, do have an interest in the economic reforms.

As for the external dangers, I would like to confirm that the Israeli threat is not only to the regime, but to the people as well. Therefore, I believe that this factor will contribute to the maintenance of the experience, because the people will defend it.

What must the national forces do in order to consolidate this experience and to involve the popular masses in the political life and democratic process?

First I would like to say that the experience is only three months old, and you can imagine the size and nature of the problems we are facing in Jordan. Yet, right now in the parliament we are focusing on the issue of democratic freedoms. This issue is the basis of all the others. Since the opening of the parliament, we have emphasized the need for democratic freedoms: the end of martial law; freedom of movement; the right to hold a passport, etc. In my view, many positive measures have been taken in this direction. For example, all passports confiscated by the intelligence apparatus have been returned to their holders. Also, all applications for new passports or renewals have been granted, to the best of my knowledge. In addition, the interference of the security forces in issuing work permits has been completely stopped.

A qualitative change has taken place in the press. The Jordanian media are now presenting criticism and the uncensored views of the opposition. Essentially, censorship has disappeared.

The other issue we are concerned about in the parliament is the devastated economy. The continuing high prices, inflation, unemployment, etc., still constitute a big worry for us. We have insistently raised the issue of the economic crisis and holding those responsible accountable. The government has promised to investigate this issue and has given the financial committee of the parliament complete authority to follow up this matter.

We have also raised the issue of the high percentage of foreign labor in the country. The government's reaction was positive. Regarding this issue, the government responded by making a decision to stop importing foreign laborers and to cease renewing their work permits. Local laborers are to replace foreigners with the exception, of course, of certain sectors where local workers are not available or qualified, such as in nursing and agriculture.

We were confronted with the obstacle of private employers who prefer to hire foreign laborers. Some of the owners of private businesses went as far as threatening the government with closing down their businesses if they were forced to replace their foreign workers by locals. This, needless to say, would be harmful to the economy. We have called on the private sector to contribute to improving the economic situation by helping us to resolve the problem of unemployment.

Moreover, there is the problem of the government finding the funds to cover subsidies on basic foodstuffs, and the scarcity of hard currency.

We have noted that the budget for 1990 does not provide for reforms in the economy; meanwhile, the debt crisis still exists; the government has submitted to the IMF's conditions; and there is still heavy dependence on foreign aid, inflation, etc. What is your analysis?

I agree that the steps taken so far in regards to economic reforms are merely temporary measures. Radical steps to reverse the economic faults that have accumulated over the years haven't taken place yet. In fact, the 1990 budget was drawn up prior to the new situation. The economic structure in Jordan is deformed. The budget does not propose any new projects, but only the financing of existing ones.

Concerning the debt, some within the government have asked us - the leftists - to demand the cancellation of all agreements with the IMF, and for Jordan to say *no* to repaying its debts. We didn't openly declare that Jordan won't pay, but Jordan will not pay. I say this to explain that the government realizes that the debt problem is grave, and that it has no means to pay.

As for aid and loans, I want to emphasize that we are not against loans. Some loans, such as development loans, are beneficial. I don't believe that any country can do without loans. We must, however, differentiate between development loans and loans that are just used to cover expenses. I believe that a large portion of our outstanding loans are high-interest, which has contributed to the debt crisis. Personally, I'm not against development loans because they have a low-interest rate and a tolerable defrayment period. Usually, there is a five to six-year period, where the government doesn't have to repay anything, and a 15 to 16-year defrayment period, which is very reasonable, if the loan was invested in a good economic project. In the past, particularly during Rifai's government, high-interest loans were taken and used to finance the budget deficit and pay salaries.

To go back to the issue of democratic freedoms, we hear of some violations such as refusing to grant entrance permits at the borders to individuals residing abroad. How do you explain this and do you discuss these issues in the parliament?

To be honest with you, we in the parliament until now haven't paid enough attention to the issue of citizens abroad, simply because we were busy with the domestic situation. Personally, although I realize that there is a great number of Jordanian citizens living outside Jordan, and they have many problems, I believe that resolving our internal problems is the first priority, taking into consideration the time factor. The new parliament has only been in session for three months. We realize that not paying enough attention to this issue is a shortcoming, but when we see that there are hundreds of citizens who have not had passports or even family records for 40 years, and their sons are drafted but meanwhile deprived of admission to universities, etc., we feel that our duty is to resolve their problems first.

This issue was raised once in the parliament at the same ▶

time with the issue of Soviet Jewish immigration to Palestine. Naturally, I and all the other MP's dropped the discussion about the former and invested the allotted time to discuss the latter.

How would you describe the coordination among the nationalist forces within the parliament?

There is full cooperation among us on the major issues, such as democratic freedoms, economic issues and the Palestinian uprising. We disagree sometimes on minor issues, but only when these are raised suddenly. Obviously, during a session, we don't have time to coordinate before we're given the chance to speak. We have resolved this problem recently by sitting next to each other; we have also agreed that we will adopt the viewpoint of those of us who know the most about the topic. However, there should be even better coordination among the democratic forces. We must be more active and take initiative within the parliament.

What is the role of the Islamic forces in the parliament? Do you feel they're an obstacle to the democratic process?

So far we haven't disagreed with the Islamic forces on any of the issues discussed. Of course we expect points of disagreement in the future, but currently we're working toward better cooperation in the interest of democracy and the country. We're not looking for a confrontation and even if we run into problems, we want to try to contain them.

There have been statements by Jordanian officials about drawing up a charter for reorganizing political activities in Jordan. The king spoke about a charter to define Jordan's political, economic and social policy. What is this charter and how is it related to the constitution which can now function after the suspension of martial law?

We have neither seen anything in writing about this charter, nor officially heard anything about it. They just say that it will not be an alternative to the constitution. Unless this charter is an appendix or further defines the constitution, we will strongly reject it. Some officials stated that the purpose of the charter is to organize party-political work in Jordan, but this is only one point of view. Meanwhile, the parliament is ignoring this issue until it is officially proposed for discussion in the parliament. As far as holding a popular referendum on the charter, as some have suggested, I believe that the parliament represents the people and therefore it should have a major role in approving or disapproving the charter.

Do you believe that the government will fulfill its promise in regards to the abolition of martial law within six months, since this was the condition on which the parliament passed a motion of confidence in the government?

Inevitably, the government will, or else it should be ready for a fierce battle. Recently, the government abolished the anti-communism law, and I believe that it will not hesitate in the next stage to abolish martial law.

How did the democratic process reflect itself vis-a-vis the Palestinian uprising?

At the parliamentary level, during the first session, the democratic forces put forth a proposal to discuss means of supporting the uprising. Currently we are working to complete the process of forming popular committees for this purpose in every district. We are pressuring the government to open the Jordanian market to the the products of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and to facilitate exporting their goods to the outside world through Jordan. Some positive measures have been taken to deal with the residents of the West Bank in Jordan, who were treated badly after ties were severed with the West Bank. Moreover, there were dozens of marches and forums that were held to commemorate the second anniversary of the uprising.

What has the parliament done in regard to the immigration of the Soviet Jews to Palestine?

Recently, the parliament decided to devote one of its sessions to discussing this threat and how to confront it. This means that the parliament should not only think of its political role regarding this issue but also of changing Jordan's strategy regarding the defense and building of the national economy, etc. The parliament also sent letters of appeal to the Soviet leadership, the US administration and the Arab regimes.

How do you view future relations between the Palestinian organizations and the regime in Jordan?

In my view, the reasons for the historical conflict with the regime no longer exist - mainly the issue of representation (of the Palestinians). Other problems will not be solved through alienation and enmity. Dialogue is necessary and possible, now that the main problem has been resolved. ●

Mubarak Caters to Israel

Recently, the Egyptian authorities handed over 10 Palestinian captives to the Israeli authorities. These 10 persons, whose names were not released, were allegedly involved in the attack on the Israeli bus near Ismailia on February 5th. This act occurred on Egyptian soil. Logically, if the Egyptian government considers it a crime, the 10 should have been charged and tried in Egyptian courts. Instead, they were simply handed over to Israel, despite its record of torture, arbitrary detention and lack of due process for Palestinians. The action of the Egyptian government flies in the face of all judicial logic, not to mention Mubarak's much proclaimed support for the Palestinian cause. One can only surmise this occurred as the result of a political decision aimed to cultivate favor with Israel and the US. ●

Perestroika and the Middle East

The fundamental and fast-paced changes taking place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have taken center stage on the world scene for the past few months, eclipsing the Palestinian intifada and other major events in the media. These changes have evoked both hope and apprehension among progressive circles, socialist countries and liberation movements the world over. This article deals with the repercussions of these developments on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

by Maher Salameh

The changes that are sparked by perestroika sweeping Eastern Europe are developing in a somewhat different direction than what is taking place in the Soviet Union itself. These changes have led to unprecedented and monumental events, from the violent overthrow of the government in Rumania, to the rise to power of non-communist leaders as in the case of Czechoslovakia and, even more dramatically, the expected merger between the German Democratic Republic and capitalist West Germany, which will in essence eventually lead to the dismantling of the former. On the other hand, the changes in the Soviet Union prompted by perestroika and glasnost have transformed the country and brought to the surface economic crises, as well as tension among different nationalities, with some republics striving to secede from the Soviet Union.

The changes taking place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have a direct impact on the Middle East conflict in general and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in particular. The repercussions of the changes have altered these socialist countries' positions on four major points: their stand on how to achieve a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict; renewal of ties with Israel; the resurrection of Zionist activities in these countries; and the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel.

The USSR and Palestinian rights

The starting point of the Soviet position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, since 1948, has emanated from recognition of the State of Israel. In the following years, the Soviet Union supported the nationalist movements that came to power in a number of Arab countries, and backed the Arab cause in the face of colonialism and foreign intervention. In the wake of the military defeat of the Arab regimes in 1967, and the subsequent Israeli occupation of the rest of Palestine and parts of Egypt and Syria, the Soviet Union once again sided with the Arabs; it played an active diplomatic role at the UN in support of the Arab cause and against Israeli aggression and occupation.

As the contemporary Palestinian revolution rose in the aftermath of the Arab regimes' 1967 defeat, it received Soviet support politically, diplomatically, militarily and materially. The emergence of the armed Palestinian resistance, and the broad popular support it engendered among the Palestinian and Arab masses put the Palestine question on the international agenda, and ellicited yet more support from the Soviet Union.

The first military showdown between Israel and the Palestinian resistance movement took place in March 1968 at Al Karameh in Jordan. The Israeli incursion into Jordan, in an attempt to destroy this frontline base of the revolution, was met with stiff resistance which cost the Israeli forces heavy losses and forced them to retreat. This battle has great significance for it posed the Palestinian armed resistance as a force to be reckoned with. Not only did it give the Palestinian masses a great moral boost, it also ushered in a new era of relations between the PLO and Soviet Union.

In 1971, the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union declared support for the Arab masses and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, but without specifying these rights. The 25th party congress pointed out that peace would not be achieved as long as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were living in miserable conditions and as long as they were unable to establish a state. The turning point in the Soviet-Palestinian relationship, however, came in 1976 when a PLO office was opened in Moscow, and in 1977 when the Soviet-Palestinian summit occurred. In 1981, the PLO office was granted full diplomatic status.

The USSR and the peace process

In 1982, the Soviet Union proposed a plan for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Unlike the Reagan plan, which was declared at the same time, the Brezhnev plan supported Palestinian rights. The second point of the plan spoke of securing the invariable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state, and facilitating the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes in accordance with UN resolutions(General Assembly resolutions 194 and 3236) and appropriate compensation for the belongings they had left behind. In addition, the plan reaffirmed Israel's right to exist within the pre-1967 boundaries; it called for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem. The plan proposed reaching a peaceful settlement through the convening of an international peace conference under UN auspices, attended by the five permanent members of the Security Council, with the PLO and Israel participating.

Since then, perestroika and the new Soviet thinking have resulted in a rearrangement of priorities and a new ▶

view of international realities and aims. Political terms like the balance of forces have been replaced by the balance of interests. The world is no longer viewed as consisting of two opposing poles, but as one world which suffers a series of contradictions, regional conflicts and other problems. In the midst of these new perceptions and priorities, the specific concerns of national liberation movements and some newly independent countries were relegated to a secondary position, while top priority is assigned to resolving contradictions between the Soviet Union and the US and other capitalist countries, mainly in Western Europe.

In this context, the four principles which have historically constituted Soviet Middle East policy(as exemplified in the Brezhnev plan above) have been modified to some degree, though not totally changed. The only constant is continued recognition of the Israeli state and its right to exist.

Concerning Palestinian national rights, the right of return is seldom mentioned in current Soviet political parlance. Gorbachev made no mention of it in his book *Perestroika*; neither did Shevardnadze name it in his speech in Cairo last year, which spelled out current Soviet Middle East policy. The right of return is of paramount importance to the Palestinian people. It is primary among their national rights, as was stipulated by the PLO in 1974, because it concerns half of the Palestinian population - specifically those who were uprooted and dispersed as a result of the establishment of the State of Israel. In the absence of implementation of the Palestinian right of return, the status quo allows only for the Israeli Law of Return which grants automatic rights to Jews from all over the world to come and settle in the land and homes of these displaced Palestinians. The Israeli Law of Return represents the essence of Zionist racist discrimination practiced against the Palestinians who are denied their basic right to live in their own country.

The Soviet conception of the means for reaching a peaceful settlement in the Middle East has also changed. Principled insistence on the convening of a fully empowered international conference, as outlined above, appears to be giving way to emphasis on bilateral negotiations between the PLO and Israel, as a prelude to such a conference.

Over the past few years, Israeli-Soviet relations have witnessed marked improvement; there were cultural and trade agreements in 1989; and a milestone was reached when Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens met with his Soviet counterpart, Schevardnadze, late last year. The meeting resulted in permission being given to the Israeli Consul Tsefi Magen and the rest of his staff to operate out of the old Israeli embassy building in Moscow; they can conduct diplomatic activity, including contacts with the Middle East section of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, in the same manner as the embassies of other Middle East countries.

Moreover, the conditions set by the Soviet Union for resuming diplomatic ties with Israel have been watered down. The Soviets are no longer demanding Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories or acceptance of the convening of an international peace conference, as preconditions for resuming diplomatic relations. Instead, they have stipulated the rather vague concept of «making progress in the peace process.»

Restoring ties with Israel

In the wake of the 1967 Israeli aggression, all the Eastern European countries, with the exception of Rumania, broke off diplomatic relations with Israel in protest of the Israeli occupation of Arab land. However, starting in September 1989, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland have renewed diplomatic relations with Israel. The German Democratic Republic, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia have expressed interest in doing so. The German Democratic Republic has agreed to meet the Israeli conditions for the resumption of relations between the two states which include GDR accepting moral responsibility for the Nazi crimes against Jews and making reparations accordingly. Thus, the GDR reneged on its own history, for it represents, politically and concretely, the anti-fascist resistance in Germany during Hitler's rule. The Israeli ambassador to West Germany, Benjamin Navon, demanded an increase in the reparation payments the Bonn government has been paying, in the case of German reunification.

This new position on the part of the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union is a clear departure and retreat from their previous stands. Israel has made no reciprocal concessions either to these countries, or in relation to the peace process. On the contrary, Israeli repression is mounting against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. In view of the declared position of the Eastern European countries on reaching a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, their rapprochement with Israel at this particular time appears illogical, especially when viewed in the context of increasing isolation of Israel on the international level. The EEC, for example, has on more than one occasion decided on economic measures against Israel in protest of its human rights violations, and to push for a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict.

In the light of these developments, Israel in concert with the Bush Administration has intensified the campaign to reverse the UN General Assembly resolution(no. 3379) equating Zionism with racism. According to US sources, the Eastern European countries who voted for this resolution in 1975, will not vote against the reversal.

Resurrection of Zionist activities

The previously clandestine Zionist activities in the Eastern European countries, and especially in the USSR, have now become overt in the midst of perestroika and glasnost. The reactionary, national chauvinist and colonialist ideology of Zionism has historically made it the enemy of socialism. Since Zionism thrives and depends on anti-Semitism in order to fulfill its dream of gathering all Jews in Palestine, the Zionists vigorously opposed the Leninist solution to the Jewish question in the context of resolving the question of the nationalities in the Soviet Union. So began the covert Zionist campaign against socialism, in concert with the imperialist countries' anti-communism.

The recent emergence of public Zionist activities in the Soviet Union has provided a new opportunity to organize the Jewish community on two fronts: getting as many Jews as possible to emigrate and settle in Israel,

and continuing the campaign against socialism, utilizing the new avenues opened by glasnost. The renewed Zionist activities have manifest themselves in various forms and permeated different facets of life in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. For example, there has been a marked increase in media reports favorable to Israel. Even more alarming was the mid-February assassination of Yevgini Yevsiyev, chairman of the Soviet Committee against the Resumption of Diplomatic Relations with Israel.

Soviet Jewish Immigration

The most crucial of the repercussions of the changes in Eastern Europe on the Middle East, is the mass immigration of Soviet Jews to occupied Palestine. A basic component of the Zionist project has been luring Jews from around the world to immigrate in order to colonize Palestine. Large numbers of immigrants bolster the Zionist state and open new horizons for its expansion, whereas emigration threatens the state's very existence.

In this context, the massive new immigration of Soviet Jews will undoubtedly alter the balance of forces in favor of Israel and make the prospects for peace less tenable, especially when these new immigrants are settled in the 1967 occupied territories. Despite Israeli government attempts to downplay the possibility that the new immigrants will be settled in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Knesset in March allocated $100 million for expanding settlements in the West Bank and Jerusalem, where 200,000 settlers are already living.

The problem does not lie in the Soviet policy of easing emigration, which is part of the overall restructuring and openness trend. In the past, the vast majority of Jews who decided to leave the Soviet Union chose to go to the US. The new mass immigration to Israel is the result of a carefully designed plan agreed upon by the Zionist movement and the US. While the US administration agreed to drastically cut back the granting of visas to Soviet Jews, Israel continues to demand that the Soviet Union not issue them passports; rather they emigrate with a document that includes an exit visa and travel visa to Israel only, forcing them to go there. This coercion is reminiscent of the thirties when Jews fleeing from Nazi terror were refused entry to the US upon the request of Zionist leaders, in an effort to route them to Palestine.

It is ironic that the US administration, which poses as the champion of human rights and always presses the Soviet Union to allow Jews to emigrate, now, when this permission is granted, slams the door in the face of the emigrants.

Still, Zionist officials are not satisfied. The Jewish Agency has submitted an official request for direct flights from the Soviet Union to Israel to avoid the stop over in transit countries(Austria, Hungary and Rumania) in order to prevent any of the emigrants from «escaping.»

The changes in Eastern Europe are an uneven process, the outcome of which is not yet totally clear. While some of the changes in these countries are not in the long-term interests of the people, in the Soviet Union there is still hope of salvaging socialism and restoring its viability in the eyes of the people. The mistakes committed in the process of building socialism have turned off the peoples of Eastern Europe to socialism as such, whereas the process of restructuring and openness in the Soviet Union was begun as a positive initiative to renew socialism.

However, Gorbachev's recipe for realizing this end has served to relegate the revolutionary forces in the developing world to a lower priority. The results are very clear, for example, in relation to Cuba: Where there was once an outlet and firm source of support for Cuba in the face of the US attempt to choke it economically, this is less true today. In the Middle East, the shift in the Soviet role, and the new relations between Eastern Europe and Israel, will tip the balance of forces further against the Palestinian struggle and strengthen the Israeli position. Bearing in mind Zionism's historically reactionary international role, this is not in the best interest of the Soviet Union or any other socialist country. ●

Bush and Shevardnadze: Did they agree on the Middle East?

Palestine Congress in Hamburg

Palestine Congress in Hamburg

From March 2nd to 4th, an international congress on Palestine was held in Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Several hundred people participated from the FRG, GDR, Italy, Holland, Denmark, France, Austria and other European countries. There was a broad range of guest speakers qualified to represent the Palestinian cause and the intifada. These included representatives from the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees in the West Bank, the Popular Committee for Health Services(West Bank), the Sons of the Village(Nazareth), and the Committee for the Defense of Arab Land, as well as a Palestinian lawyer from Jerusalem, a former political prisoner and a PNC member. The democratic forces in Israel and the anti-Zionist position among Jews was well represented by an Israeli woman who works at the Alternative Information Center,Jerusalem,and members of the *Return* group in London.

Over 800 people participated in the opening session where speakers discussed different aspects of the intifada, the situation of Palestinians in Israel and the impact of the intifada on Israeli society. The second day of the congress was devoted to working group discussions on the following topics: the intifada's popular committees, repression and political prisoners, women in the intifada, the Palestinians in Israel and the intifada's impact on Israel. The congress concluded with a plenary discussion of solidarity work with the intifada, including past experience, problems and proposals for concrete support initiatives.

Many participants at the congress linked the struggle of progressive forces in Western Europe with the Palestinian struggle, and felt that the congress opened new avenues for coordination in solidarity work as well as international discussions. The Friends of the Palestinian People group in Hamburg took initiative to convene this congress based on the desire to strengthen the coordination between groups working in solidarity with the intifada. The congress was being prepared as the changes in Eastern Europe were happening, creating new conditions for anti-imperialist work in Western Europe and worldwide. The congress was held on the premise that international solidarity is more important than ever if the progressive forces are to face the consequences of these changes, particularly the revival of national chauvinism in the FRG, and capitalism's new opportunities for exploitation. In this situation, broad international discussions are needed to strengthen solidarity based on a common understanding of the concrete conditions under which various movements struggle.

Principles of solidarity

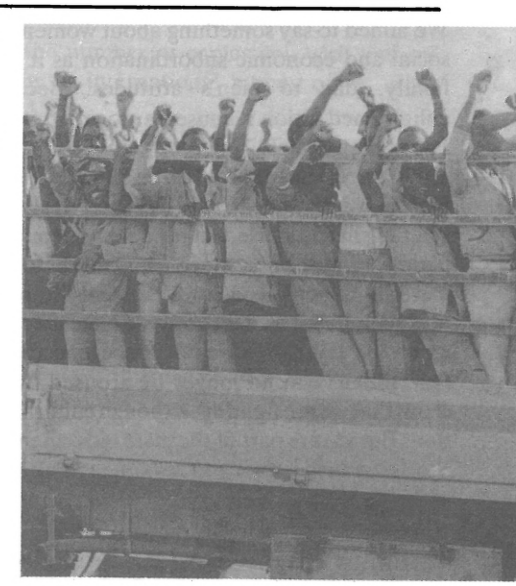
Uri Davis of *Return* addressed the congress at the final session, emphasizing unity in the struggle for freedom and for spreading the truth. He pointed out that the resistance to occupation and the anti-Zionist left in Israel are in a process of building a new Palestine, based on justice and equality. He also noted that the congress had been criticized by some forces in the FRG for inviting representatives of

the anti-Zionist opposition in Israel, saying that he supported the decision to invite them because it is absolutely necessary and correct to integrate everybody in the struggle for the triumph of truth.

The representative of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees also addressed the final session, and her words were considered as a common platform for future activities. She began by greeting the congress from the masses of the intifada, and continued to say: «Our national struggle is waged in different forms, reflecting the justified will of our people to obtain their rights to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on their national territory under the leadership of the PLO, their sole legitimate representative. The continuation of the intifada until it reaches its goals of freedom and independence, is an expression of our people's rejection of the Zionist occupation. We assure you that we will continue despite all the repression... despite all the political conspiracies by the US administration and its agents in the region, which aim at smashing the intifada so it will not achieve its goals. Our will and national unity have proven stronger than all the repression, destruction and conspiracies...»

She commended the congress as an important demonstration of solidarity with the Palestinian people, and the first of its kind in the FRG, emphasizing that the spirit of the intifada is one of unity and cooperation that should also prevail in Palestine solidarity work. She had three proposals for work in the coming period: (1) forming a committee to coordinate the solidarity work; (2) efforts to stop the immigration of Soviet Jews to Palestine, since this furthers the Zionist aim of expelling Palestinians from their homeland; and (3) intensified solidarity activities to support the daily struggle of the intifada. This could include pressure to reopen the Palestinian universities, schools and kindergartens, campaigns for political prisoners, exposure of Zionist policies like house demolition and expulsion, and concrete material support, especially to Palestinian families and children who are hardest hit by the repression. She also encourged more working visits to Palestine as a form of moral support to the intifada, as well as a way to build stronger relations of solidarity. ●

Namibia Celebrates Independence



Colonialism in Africa was dealt another blow on March 21st when Namibia celebrated its first day of independence. As jubilant Namibians witnessed the raising of their new republic's flag at midnight on Independence Day, over a century of colonial occupation officially came to an end. Sam Nujoma,leader of SWAPO during its 30-year war of liberation against South Africa, was sworn in as Namibia's first president. In his inaugural speech, Nujoma said that a new era of justice had begun for his people. The country's independence will certainly strengthen the position of the Frontline States vis-a-vis the apartheid regime in South Africa. This sentiment was expressed by the crowd as people shouted, «We're free!» and «South Africa is next!»

This historic event was celebrated as well by progressive forces worldwide as a victory over racism and imperialism. We at *Democratic Palestine* take this opportunity to congratulate the people of Namibia on their establishment of an independent state.

Cultural Struggle is Our Ambition

Nidal Al Saleh made the following interview with Iman Aoun, an actress in *Al Hakawati* theater group, while she was visiting Cairo.

The Palestinian intifada is not only resistance by stones. Could you tell us about the role of cultural activities in confronting the Israeli occupation?

Before responding to your question, let me tell about the group itself and how it came into being. The Palestinian *Al Hakawati* theater group was created in the mid-seventies by a group of six people: the director, Francois Abu Salem, and the actors Jacky Lubeck, Edward Muaalem, Amer Khalil, Nabil Al Hajer and myself, who were studying drama at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. There are also other co-workers. The first play presented by the group was «The Father, Son and Holy Ghost,» about Arab women and especially Palestinian women. We aimed to say something about women and their position of social and economic subordination as it prevails in the Arab family, due to men's attitudes. Because of this play's enlightened vision it caused a storm of protest in conservative Palestinian circles.

Concerning our role in the struggle against the Israeli occupation, we don't believe in a theater of slogans. We tend to use symbolism and satire, not because we fear confronting the occupation, but we reject sloganism and rhetoric. It is true that our material is borrowed from the real life of Palestinians under occupation, but we seek to avoid mechanically copying this reality on the stage. We are not concerned about being direct, and Palestinians can no longer be aroused by rhetoric. We don't claim that we are fighting, although cultural struggle is our ambition. But we are part of the mass movement in the occupied territories, which is trying to restore the Palestinian land, heritage and right to live.

The martyr Ghassan Kanafani described the «cultural siege» imposed by the Zionist occupation on Palestinian Arab intellectuals. Surely this siege has intensified during the intifada. How do the occupation authorities deal with the work of your group?

Saying occupation means censorship. Our activities, like other cultural activities, are subject to the censorship of the military governor. Even the Hebrew theater faces this, but with the difference in the nature and form of censorship. For example, the Israelis consider Jerusalem, where we reside, as a united city. They therefore stipulate that we get permission from the military governor before presenting a show in Jerusalem or other Palestinian cities and villages. But we need two permits in the West Bank, one from the military governor of Jerusalem and another from the military governor in the area where we want to present our show.

Moreover, the Zionist censor tried to impose an Israeli name on our group. He asked us to use a name such as «Jerusalem Al Hakawati Group from Israel» or the «Israeli Al Hakawati Group» on our program. However, we rejected this in spite of the pressure exerted by the censor on the printing house. When we found such a name on the program, we cancelled the performance.

How does the group choose the plays it produces?

To date, we have presented many plays. All of them were written by the group with the exception of Emil Lahoud's novel, *The Six-Day Sextet,* which we dramatized. In fact, all of us participate in preparing the plays which usually begin with an idea from one of us.

Does *Al Hakawati* create its own plays because none are being written in the occupied territories, or because you are seeking new dramatic methods?

Neither. Palestine does not have a theater tradition, but we don't write our texts just out of a desire for experimentation. We do it because we are very concerned with moving away from propagandistic art. The plays written in the occupied territories are characterized by direct agitation, and what we have presented is aimed at eliminating this. Politics pervades everything; Palestinians breathe politics, willingly or not. However, we don't believe that our battle with Zionism is a political one only, but a battle of existence. In our plays, we want to deal with Palestinian life with all its social and class aspects, without ignoring the political aspect.

How many plays has *Al Hakawati* presented?

We have presented many plays: Our first plays were «The Father, Son and Holy Ghost» and «One Thousand and One Nights of a Stonethrower» which was presented in 1982 and predicted the intifada. «An Eye for an Eye and a Tooth for a Tooth» dealt with our struggle against the occupation. «The Story of Kafr Shama» discussed the relationship between Palestinians in the homeland and those in exile, raising the following questions: Does the land exist in the heart and mind, or is it the tangible soil? And where is the linkage between the two? We also presented a play entitled «Ali of the Galilee,» among a number of the others.

Last summer, *Al Hakawati* was invited to perform in the US, but the invitation was cancelled for political reasons, causing strong protests in the leftist and Arab press there. Would you talk about that?

We were invited by the Republican Theater to present 15 performances. Everything was going normally, but after signing the contract with those in charge of the theater, the invitation was cancelled without reasons being given. Later we learned that Zionists who were financing the theater pressured those in

charge to cancel the contract. We therefore contacted the press to raise this question. Immediately, we received another invitation from the New York Theater. We received a remarkable reception by the US audience. After our first show, it was difficult to get a ticket less than a week in advance. Since it is impossible to blot out the sun, the Zionists cannot destroy our cultural character, whatever they do.

Were you invited to Arab theater festivals?

We were invited three times to the Carthage Theater Festival and to others in Morocco and Kuwait. We are hoping to perform in Cairo this year, and to participate in the Damascus Theater Festival. But this doesn't fulfill our dream of having ongoing contacts with our Arab brothers.

What has been the reaction to your productions?

The reactions come from two sources. The first is connected to the occupied territories and the second is the attitude in the West. There are two contradictory positions on our work in the occupied territories: One is supporting us, and the other is opposing us for our use of symbolism. Concerning the West, it is the intifada that has played a decisive role in getting Western audiences to attend our shows. In fact, we always feared facing this audience, not only because of their education and taste in theater, but because we feared not being able to dispell the effects of Zionist propaganda on them. In spite of that, Western audiences have expressed acceptance of our theater's form, content and vision. Moreover, we have received offers to perform at international festivals, and prominent newspapers, such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian,* have praised our work.

How do you feel about *Al Hakawati*'s receiving a special award from the Arab Thought Forum?

We are very happy for two reasons: The first is that our group was chosen since it represents one of the cultural activities in the occupied territories. The second is because this sign of appreciation comes from an Arab group that we hold in esteem. ●

New Book: The Calls of the Intifada

Ibal Publishing Ltd. has come out with a book, *No Voice is Louder than the Voice of the Uprising* in English, which contains calls 1-47 of the United National Leadership of the Uprising in the Occupied Territories/State of Palestine. Covering the period from January 1988 until October 1989, this collection of the calls provides a first-hand document of the daily struggle and political positions of the Palestinian intifada in its first two years. The text of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence is also included.

We are sending one copy of this book to all our subscribers, which will be counted as your receiving one issue of *Democratic Palestine*. You can order additional copies by writing to *Democratic Palestine*, Box 30192, Damascus, Syria. Please specify the number of copies you wish and enclose your payment in an international money order. Each copy of the book is $5.

Copies of the PFLP's 4th Congress *Political Report* and *Tasks of the New Stage* (Report of the PFLP's 3rd Congress) are still available, if you want to order them at the same time. They are priced at $5 each.

Payment for the books you order can be made by international money order or by depositing the amount in our bank account as shown on the inside front cover of this magazine. Sorry, we cannot accept personal checks for amounts less than $20. ●