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DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

Intifada – Frontline Struggle for a Just Peace

DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE

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– Conveying the political line of progressive Palestinian and Arab forces;
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– 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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Editor: Talal Ahmed
Editorial committee: Ahmed Halaweh, Lina Al Aswad, Farida Al Asmar, Itimad Musa

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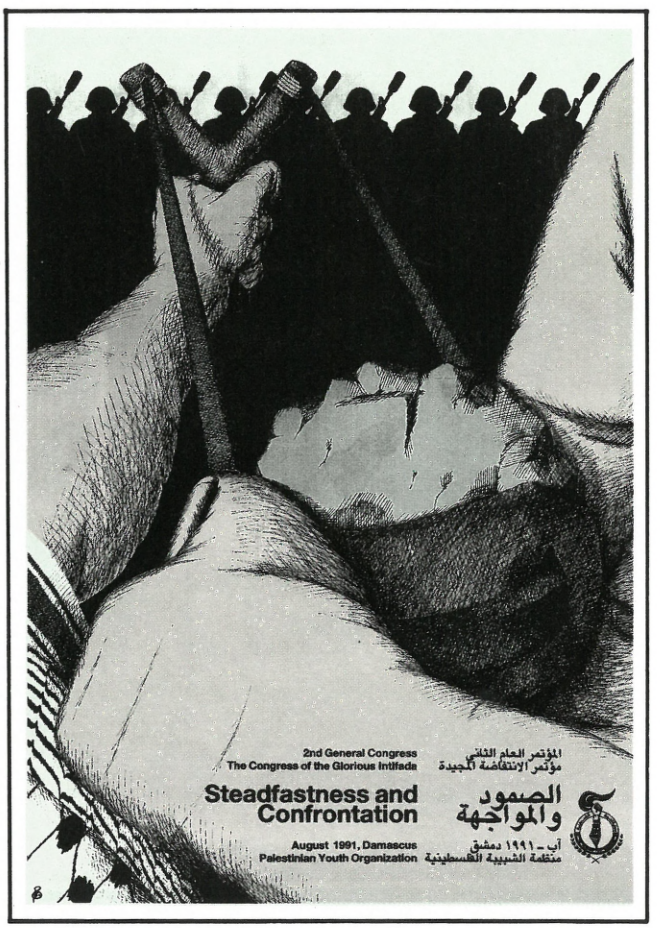
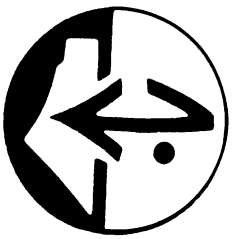


Palestinian Views on «Pax Americana»

PFLP Politbureau Statement July 14th, excerpt



The main subject addressed by the PFLP Politbureau statement of July 14th was the urgency of revitalizing and developing the Palestinian intifada in the occupied territories. Since this topic is addressed in an article in this issue, we here reprint only an excerpt of the statement which characterizes the current US – orchestrated «peace» process.

Our awareness of the various attempts to quell and abort the intifada should by no means make us neglect the other US – Zionist – reactionary attempt, orchestrated from Washington D.C., to liquidate the Palestinian cause. This is most clearly seen in the US's intensified efforts carried out behind the false and deceptive facade of settling the Arab – Zionist conflict and allegedly bringing peace to the area. We say *allegedly* because the substance of US policy, which complies with Zionist policy, is based on bypassing Palestinian representation and negating Palestinian national rights which have been confirmed by UN resolutions – resolutions which the White House chiefs apply according to a double standard.

It has become very clear that the US – Zionist plan to end the Arab – Zionist conflict, and above all the Palestinian – Zionist conflict, is moving on three major tracks:

First: Excluding the UN presence and resolutions from the political endeavors to end the conflict, restricting this job to the US alone.

Second: Replacing the international conference, as a framework for reaching a settlement, with the «festivities» of the so – called regional conference which has no powers whatsoever and is merely intended to serve as an umbrella for direct, bilateral talks.

Third: Replacing independent Palestinian representation with a joint Jordanian – Palestinian delegation.

To put this plan into action, the US administration and the Zionist government are banking on some Arab parties accepting the Israeli conditions without getting much in return. This was made very clear by the US proposal for Israel to stop building settlements in return for the Arab countries agreeing to end all forms of hostility towards the Zionist entity and normalizing relations with it.

Throughout all the Palestinian and Arab attempts to neutralize the US or appeal for its help in forcing the Zionist entity to accept the UN resolutions, it has become quite plain that supposing this to be possible is no more than a fata morgana which has no relation to reality. These attempts show that the only way to restore usurped rights is to retrieve them by force, by practicing and escalating all forms of struggle, reinforcing and developing the intifada and embarking on a radical, comprehensive process of democratic reform in the bodies, institutions, policies, tactics and practices of the PLO.

In this context, the process of forming a new PNC and convening it as soon as possible is made more urgent. This would be the correct point of departure for implementing these guidelines, provided that it (the coming PNC session) is attended by the various Palestinian organizations and becomes the real, just representative of all Palestinian national and social forces. This would enable making the hoped – for change at this stage on the basis of a daring political reconsideration, a revolution of self – criticism and pumping new blood into the revolution. In this context, it would be of great importance to coordinate the Palestinian and Arab positions towards the peace process, and in particular between the Arab countries bordering Israel.

UNL Call No.73, August 1st, excerpt

Excerpt from call no. 73 issued by the United National Leadership of the Intifada/PLO in the State of Palestine, August lst:

...the UNL condemns the concessions given to Israel by the Egyptian president via his suggestion for lifting the Arab economic boycott of Israel, in exchange for a halt to settlement – building; we also condemn the approval of this suggestion by some US – led Arab states. We consider this suggestion as a conspiracy aiming to normalize relations between the Arab states and Israel in return for the usurpation of the Palestinians' rights. The UNL also denounces the stand of the Arab states which have agreed to attend that miserable conference that excludes the PLO and fails to respond to our people's legitimate rights. We consider this an attempt to isolate the Arab – Israeli conflict from its essence – the Palestinian cause – and to turn the conflict into a mere border dispute between the Arab countries and the Zionist entity. In this context, the memorandum of understanding between the US and Israel about Palestinian representation, the Israeli stress on the eternity of the annexation of the Golan Heights and even establishing new settlements there, and the new Israeli plan for the occupied territories are but new proof of Israeli – US hostility towards Arab and Palestinian rights.

The UNL condemns the continued US – NATO threats to strike Iraq and the attempts to annihilate this steadfast Arab country, both physically and spiritually. In this regard, we call on the Arab masses to rise up against the Arab regimes which are backing this conspiracy.

The UNL congratulates the Eritrean people for achieving national independence.

The UNL appreciates the efforts of the preparatory committee for forming a new PNC based on increasing the participation of the masses, the Palestinian national institutions and organizations...

– Translation: 'Amr Dasouqi: ●

Judging the Peace Process

Despite the progress made by the US in its diplomatic efforts, great doubt remains about a just and comprehensive peace being established in the Middle East. This is due to the bias of the Bush administration's proposals, as well as to Israel's rejectionism and arrogance.

by Ahmed Halaweh

On July 31st, at the end of the two-day summit with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, US President George Bush declared that the US and Soviet Union would co-sponsor the proposed Middle East peace conference to be held in October He said that invitations would be sent to all parties concerned 10 days before the conference convened, adding that there is a «historic opportunity» for «a just and compre-hensive peace» in the area, based on UN resolutions 242 and 338. Bush also announced that Secretary of State James Baker was returning to the region with the aim of bringing all parties to the conference. This is a strong indication that the Bush administration is determined to push forward in its efforts, especially after its success in obtaining the consent of the Arab states, in one way or another, to the US proposals.

Baker's previous five trips in fact succeeded in resolving two main issues that had blocked the «peace» process, namely the duration of the so-called regional conference and the role of the UN in such a conference. According to Bush's proposals, the UN would be represented by a silent observer who would «take notes, and can communicate with the participants and the sponsors...» (Associated Press, July 19th). The observer can also report to UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Concerning the other point, the US proposed that the conference could be reconvened only with the consent of all partes. Thus, Baker's August lst return to the Middle East, his sixth shuttle since the end of the Gulf war, aimed to address the remaining problem, i.e. Palestinian representation at the conference, and to guarantee the Israeli government's attendance.

The day before the US-Soviet summit ended, Israel announced that it would not attend a Middle East conference unless it receives US guarantees about Palestinian participation. Previously the Israeli government had asked the Bush administration for clarifications about a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation: who would lead it, how it would make decisions, who would speak for it at the opening session of the conference, and under which flag it would sit. But after meeting Baker upon his arrival in occupied Palestine on August lst, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir announced that Israel would attend the conference on condition that Palestinians of East Jerusalem and in exile are not included in a Jordanian - Palestinian delegation. Although Shamir only repeated the Israeli position of saying «no» by giving a conditional «yes,» Baker enthusiastically welcomed his position, describing it as a «significant development» that moves the peace process forward. In a strong indication of his support for the Israeli condition, Baker urged Faysel Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi, the Palestinians whom he met in Jerusalem, to reconsider the situation and accept the conference proposal without putting conditions. Baker issued an even more obvious warning as he was leaving for Jordan. After naming the parties that had agreed to attend the conference, he warned the Palestinians not to refuse and lose the opportunity of attending the conference; otherwise, they would be the sole losers.

It has become increasingly clear that Baker is saying that the «peace» process is advancing, with or without the Palestinians, heading toward its final end which both Bush and Baker repeatedly identify as a «just and comprehensive peace.» While the US administration tries to project that peace is at hand, one would ask: What sort of peace are the various parties aiming for, or ready to accept? However, if peace is not at hand, one would ask: Why not? To evaluate these two questions, it is necessary to analyze the motives of the respective parties and the conditions that determine their political maneuvers.

The US proposals and motives

Among the most destructive consequences of the Gulf war was the rapid shift in the balance of forces in favor of the imperialist, Zionist and reactionary camp; increased US ability to influence international and regional affairs; and an openly declared, official Arab tendency to follow the US plans in the region. The other side of this dramatic change is the frustration and despair which swept the area as a result of the destruction of Iraq; the ongoing attacks and conspiracies against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, Kuwait, Lebanon and some other Arab countries; and the increased fragmentation of the Arab world. These realities convinced Arab states that the wind favors the US and Israeli sails. Under these conditions, opportunities for a US-orchestrated settlement of the Arab - Israeli conflict and the Palestinian problem increased enormously.

For the US, it is a golden opportunity to move swiftly towards resolving the conflict and establishing reactionary stability in the area, motivated by a number of considerations. A prime consideration is that the US, as the leader of the imperialist camp, views the persistence of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a potential danger to the long-term interests of imperialism; the continuation of the conflict could lead to revolutionary upheaval in the whole area, not only threatening imperialist interests, but also undermining its natural alliance with Arab reaction. A related consideration is insuring that the reactionary Arab regimes remain in power, since they should secure imperialist domination of the region. More important, the strength of Zionism and Israel, the creator of the conflict, might be challenged, so that imperialism

would lose its main partner in the region.

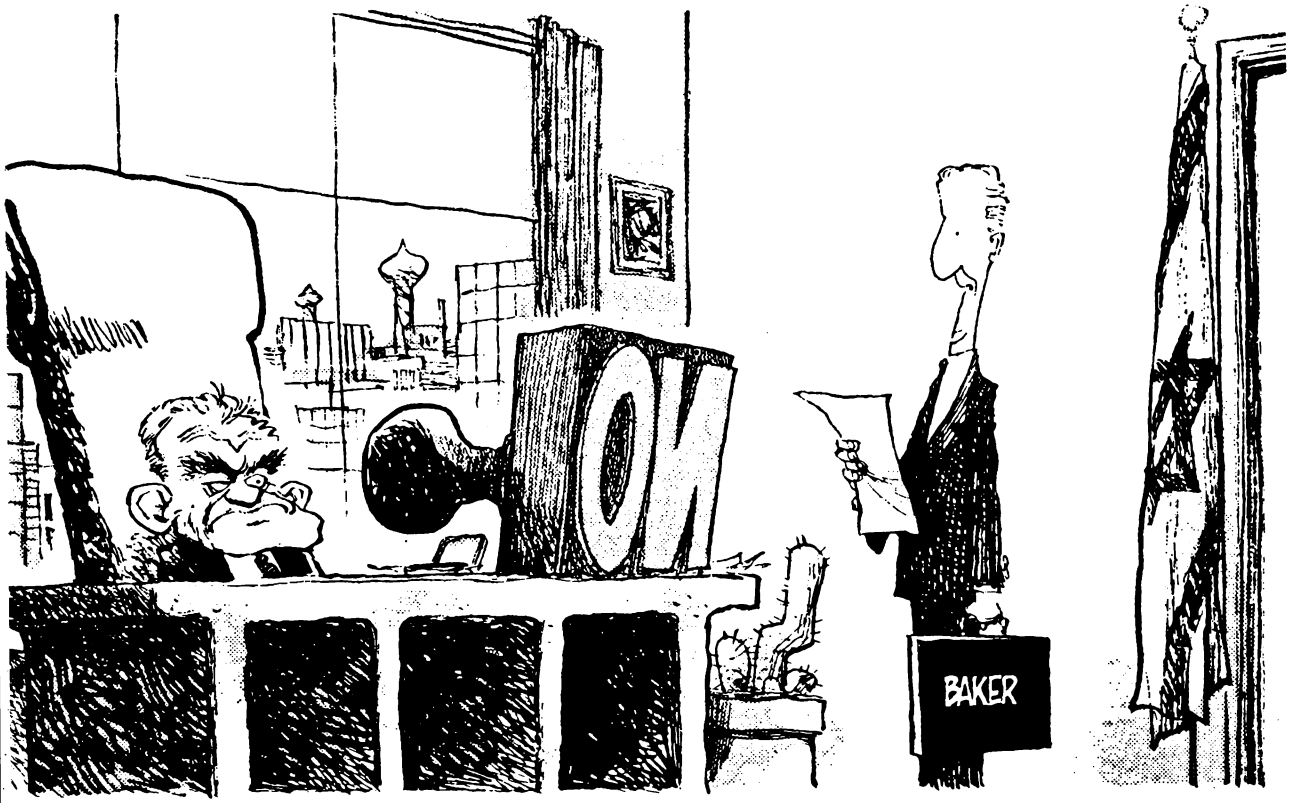
In as much as the persistence of the Arab – Israeli conflict poses a threat to the interests of imperialism, Israel and Arab reaction, any «peace» plan worked out by these parties would obviously be geared towards securing their interests. This includes securing official Arab recognition of Israel as a legitimate, permanent and integral part of the region, eliminating any resistance to it and pushing the Arab countries to normalize relations with it. The real meaning of this is liquidation of the Palestinian cause and imposing total surrender on the Arab nation. The rhetoric of Bush and Baker about a «just peace» and Washington's neutrality notwithstanding, the US «peace» proposals are no more and no less than a plan of liquidation – a revised version of Shamir's plan. Both say «no» to an international peace conference, «no» to a Palestinian state and «no» to the PLO. Both raise many questions about any Palestinian representation in the so – called regional conference. The US has reportedly agreed with Israel that only Palestinians from the occupied West Bank (excluding Jerusalem) and Gaza Strip can be represented at the conference.

With the objective of increasing pressure on the PLO, Baker visited Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, urging their leaders to convince the PLO to accept the Israeli conditions concerning Palestinian representation at the conference. By convincing the Maghreb states to assent to the conference, Washington hopes to isolate the Palestinian people from their Arab environment, as an introduction to tightening the political blockade around them.

Excluding East Jerusalem Palestinians from the «peace» talks aims to reinforce the Israeli contention that Jerusalem as a whole is an integral part of the Zionist state, although the US has never officially recognized the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem in 1967. Not only Jerusalem is targeted by the US – Israeli plan; all the occupied territories are. US intentions were further revealed when Israeli newspapers published excerpts from former US President Gerald Ford's 1975 letter to Yitzhak Rabin, who was then prime minister. The excerpt reads: «the US has not developed a final position on the borders. Should it do so, it will give great weight to Israel's position that any peace agreement with Syria must be predicated on Israel's remaining on the Golan Heights.» When asked about this, Baker indicated that Ford's promise would be honored by the Bush administration (Associated Press, July 23rd).

While the Bush administration demands that the PLO and Arab states be more flexible and give more concessions, Israel continues to expand and accelerate the construction of Zionist settlements in the occupied territories. The latest reports are that it plans to set up nearly 4,000 prefabricated units in the next few months. In spite of this, all the US has done is to try to calm the Arab states and to trick them by gently rebuking Israel for the settlement activity, appealing to it not to build new settlements. It seems that Baker is ignoring his own testimony before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on foreign operations on May 22nd, when he explained that «nothing has made my job of trying to find Arab and Palestinian partners for Israel more difficult than being greeted by a new settlement every time I arrive,» adding that he didn't «think that there is any bigger obstacle to peace than the settlement activity that continues not only unabated but at an enhanced pace» (*International Herald Tribune*, May 23rd).

In addition, the Arab demand for an international conference, as the suitable framework for resolving the Middle East crisis, was rejected by both the US and ▶



"We're getting close, Mr. Shamir . . . They've found two Palestinian shepherds who can't spell P.L.O. and a little old lady who only keeps a P.O. Box in East Jerusalem . . . "

Israel who proceeded to reduce it to a powerless, one – day conference with the sole function of paving the way for more humiliating versions of the Camp David accords.

In the final analysis, the revived Baker – Shamir proposals are part of a Zionist – imperialist plan intended to liquidate the Palestinian cause and subjugate the Arab states. Washington chose precisely this time to push its plans because it believes that the regional conditions are ripe for enforcing such proposals, presenting a favorable opportunity for decisive destruction of the Palestinian and Arab masses' will to resist and fight for liberation. Yet, in spite of the changes sweeping the area, the ongoing US «peace» efforts, the numerous shuttles, meetings, statements and counterstatements, there is no reason to believe that the Arab – Israeli conflict is heading towards «a just and comprehensive solution,» in view of the nature of the US proposals and intentions, and the Israeli position which defies the world community, international law, the UN Charter and resolutions and even the US.

Israel's concept of peace

It is not true that Israel is against settling the Arab – Israeli conflict. Under the new conditions that resulted from the Gulf War, Israel would be the main regional beneficiary from resolving the conflict, especially if the Arab regimes continue giving concession after concession. Israel would benefit from an end to the war of attrition which saps its human, economic and military resources. Solving the conflict also holds out the prospects of economic expansion whereby Israel could benefit from access to the markets of the region. A new situation would be created wherein Israel could attain the leading regional position capable of influencing developments on the military, economic and political levels. Since the Palestinian people are the antithesis of Zionism's existence in Palestine, the only way to resolve the conflict from the Israeli point of view is to liquidate the Palestinian cause and eliminate its influence in the region.

From this angle, one can understand Israel's objection to independent Palestinian participation in the proposed regional conference. While Israel seeks a settlement of the conflict in order to fulfill its Zionist aims, which essentially contradict the concept of peace, it seeks the liquidation of the Palestinians' legitimate rights and national cause. The apparent contradiction between peace and liquidation is not a contradiction at all in Zionist terms. If there is any contradiction involved, it is the one between Israel's calls for peace and normalization with the Arab states on the one hand, and the essence of Zionism's inherent expansionism on the other.

The big question remains: Does Israel intend to withdraw from the occupied territories in order to contribute to a peaceful settlement? The decisive answer has been given by many Israeli officials who, time and again, have said that they will not yield any portion, not even one inch of the West Bank, Gaza Strip or Golan Heights. In answer to a question about the possibilities of trading land for peace, Shamir clarified: «I do not believe in territorial compromise. Our country is very small.» He added, «I believe with all my heart and soul that we are eternally tied to this homeland. Peace and security go together. Security, and a territory, a homeland – it all goes together. That is our belief, that is the belief of the party I belong to and in my opinion, that is the feeling of a large majority of the Jewish nation» *(International Herald Tribune,* July 25th).

Although Shamir's statement is nothing new, it confirms Israel's position that the pre-June 1967 frontiers no longer exist. If the Arab side demands Israeli withdrawal to these frontiers, Israel will not discuss anything because, in Shamir's eyes, Israel is not occupying any territory and the «land of Israel» is a single territorial unit. In other words, Shamir demands that the Arabs surrender and recognize Israel's «right» to have both occupied land and peace. Guided by the same position, Israel opposed the convening of an international peace conference and even UN involvement in the proposed regional conference, claiming that the UN is biased and not deserving of confidence, despite the fact that Israeli statehood was declared on the basis of a UN resolution and the international body immediately recognized the new state.

Israel, in fact, realizes the falsity of its arguments about the UN. Its accusations aim to delegitimize the UN as a party to peace talks, and to block any move towards a comprehensive settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which demand Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories. In addition to being an attempt to escape implementation of the UN resolutions concerned, Israel's objection is also a real insult to the UN.

Aiming to block any territorial concessions, Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon criticized Shamir for his cooperation with the US «peace» efforts, and called for expanding settlement activity in the occupied territories, as the best way to rule out Israeli concessions in «peace» talks. In Sharon's words: «We have to fight against this loss of direction and create facts that are the Zionist answer... We will continue to settle, we will continue to build» (Associated Press, July 26th).

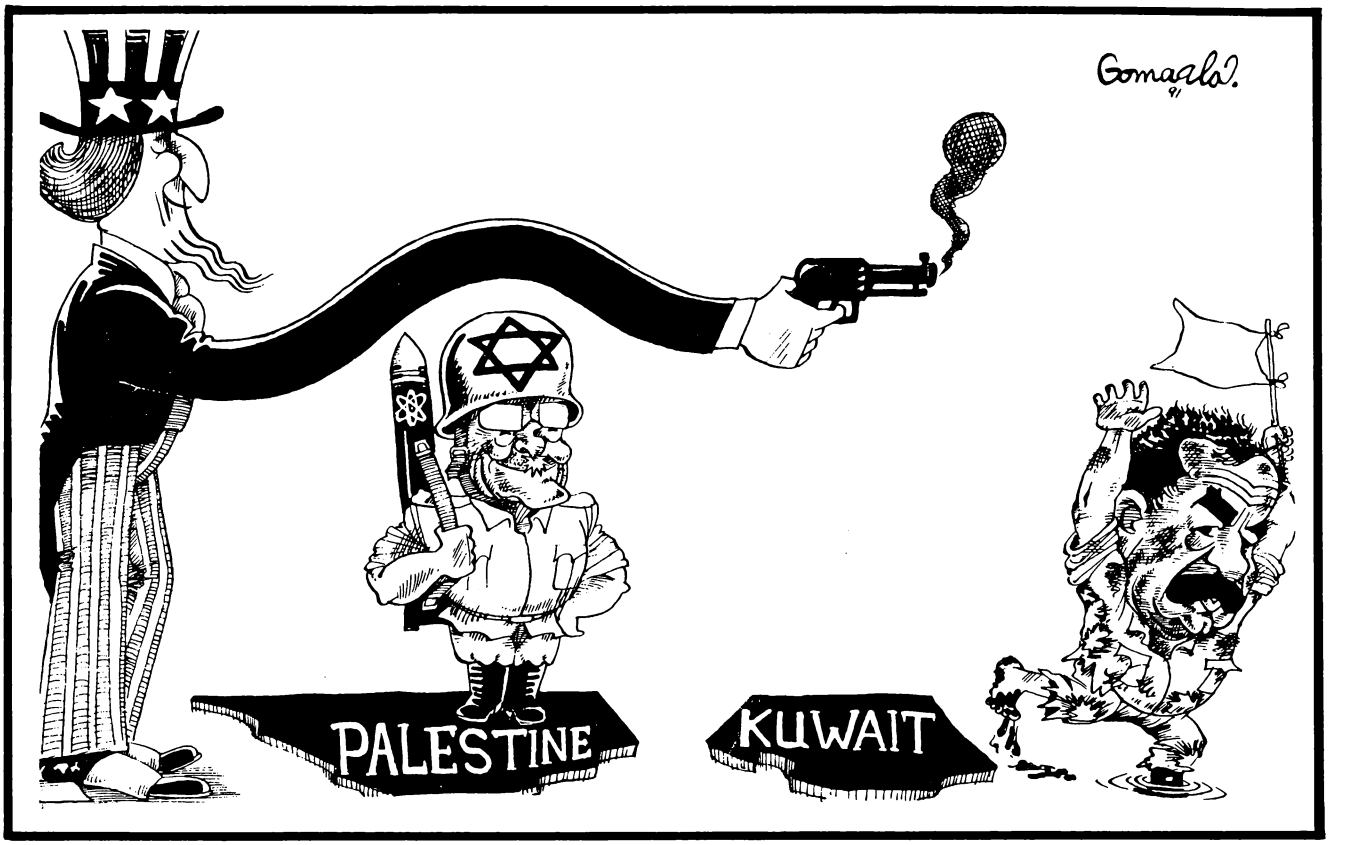
In fact, Shamir and Sharon concur totally on the importance of settlement activity as the way to create facts that will in turn dictate the terms of any negotiations. When President Husni Mubarak of Egypt proposed suspending the Arab boycott in exchange for a halt to settlement activity in the occupied territories, a statement issued by Shamir's office rejected the idea out of hand, saying there was «no connection between the two things» (Associated Press, July 18th).

The official Arab position

As a result, it seems that what the US administration and the Arab states are calling a solution based on the principle of «land for peace» is in reality based on the Zionist logic of «peace for peace.» Moreover, in the prevailing conditions, the so – called regional conference is no more than a regional reconciliation with the sole function of legitimizing the Zionist state (in its expanded form) and normalizing relations between it and the Arab states. There are two main reasons for evaluating the nature of the proposed conference in this way: The first is deterioration of the official Arab position, and the second is the US role in the «peace» process.

In the light of successive Arab concessions, there is no doubt that the Arab – Israeli conflict is entering a very critical stage. If not confronted, the dangers of this stage can have catastrophic effects on the future of the Palestinian and Arab people's struggle for national independence and social progress. These dangers basically stem from the fact that there is a sea change in Arab attitudes not only towards the US, but also towards Israel, whose encroachments have been resisted by the Arab masses since its establishment. It is a serious and unprecedented phenomenon to see the majority of the Arab states backing the US plan, the essence of which is liquidating the Palestinian cause and subjugating the Arab masses. This is the first time that so many Arab states take such a dangerous step towards accepting the Zionist entity and normalizing relations with it. If one has to give a precise description of this change, on can only say that it is a turnabout in Arab political concepts.

This turnabout inevitably leads to



another serious change, best expressed by the ongoing «peace» process, since the Arab states are dealing with the Palestinian cause as if it can be solved by political means, dialogue and negotiations alone under the present balance of forces. This means that the Arab regimes as a bloc have officially relinguished the concept of liberation. In the process of this transformation, the Zionist entity is dealt with as a natural state in the region, rather than a settler – colonial society. Thus, the Arab states' conflict with Israel is no longer about to whom Palestine belongs, but about which borders Israel might accept. As much as various Arab states may justify their position by saying that there will be a just and comprehensive peace, they realize that a just peace is impossible without a change in the balance of forces. There is a distinction between peace and surrender, and what is taking place is an Arab surrender. If any Arab state gets some territorial concessions from Israel, which is unlikely, this will not change the basic nature of the deal being planned. Without addressing the roots of the conflict, any such «peace» agreement between Israel and the Arab states will inevitably be no more than a truce; renewal of the conflict remains a constant possibility, if for no other reason than Israel's expansionist policy.

Resisting the collapse

That is the new Arab situation with its gloomy outlook and complicated developments. But in spite of this, hope still exists for halting the dangerous slide towards surrender and eliminating the reasons for it, because neither the policy of concessions nor reliance on the US's alleged neutrality can lead to a just and lasting peace. Moreover, while the «peace» process now appears to be advancing, its avoidance of addressing the Palestinian factor may spell its ultimate failure.

It is true that the US efforts have made considerable progress as of now, with the help of the Arab regimes. But it is unlikely that peace can be created without the Palestinian people's sole and legitimate representative, the PLO. If Baker's warning to the Palestinians about their participation in the regional conference was seriously meant, then he should recall the reason for the suspension of his efforts two years ago. These efforts in fact deadlocked on the question of Palestinian representation in the peace process. Conditions may have changed, but the Palestinian people's representative has not. It is still the PLO.

The responsibility for reconstructing the Arab position so that it could counter the US – Israeli schemes, rests on the PLO, as the key player in any peace process, as well on the Arab states, especially those surrounding occupied Palestine. To reconstruct the Arab position, there must first of all be a principled rejection of the whole US – Israeli concept of a settlement, since this leads to capitulation. In struggling against surrender and for a just peace, it is equally important to concentrate joint efforts on supporting the intifada, enabling its escalation. This is the most effective means of applying pressure aimed to isolate the Israeli occupiers internationally and force them to comply with the UN resolutions relevant to resolving the question of Palestine. If negotiations are to lead to a just and comprehensive peace, they must occur in the framework of a UN-sponsored international conference. There should thereby be international guarantees for total Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories and for fulfillment of the Palestinian people's rights to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital, under the leadership of the PLO. Only continued struggle can hope to force the US and Israel to accept such a just and comprehensive peace.

Dateline: August 10th

Reassessing the Intifada

by Farida Al Asmar

For well over a year now, the Palestinian intifada has been facing serious problems, which were subsequently aggravated by the Gulf war and its aftermath. Many of the difficulties stem from weak points in Palestinian policy, but objective obstacles related to the Israeli occupation also play a major role. It is not the people's will to fight for their freedom and independence that is in question; in fact, acts of militancy are on the rise. Yet, a more consistent political line and practice, as well as more support to the intifada, are needed from the PLO and its component organizations, to empower the people in the occupied territories. The broad mass participation and organization of 1988 – 89 must be restored, perhaps in a new way, if the intifada is to meet the current challenges.

Israeli – created obstacles

The Israeli government's categorical dismissal of the Palestinian peace initiative of November 1988 delineates the overall condition in which the activities of the intifada began to decline in 1990. Already at this point the problem intersects with Palestinian policy. The false expectations promoted by sectors of the PLO leadership – that a Palestinian state could be established soon – left the intifada ill – prepared to face the ensuing stalemate. While the PLO relied on the intifada to score gains for the Palestinian cause, excessive attention and resources were devoted to the diplomatic struggle, at the expense of substantive support to the intifada itself. Programs adopted to escalate the intifada were not thoroughly implemented. The PLO as a whole did not use its military capacity to support the intifada by confronting the Israeli occupation forces with firepower. Nor were Palestinian communities in exile systematically mobilized in support of the struggle in the occupied territories.

As a result, the population of the occupied territories was not provided with sufficient material support to counter successive waves of Zionist attacks. There was seeming disregard for «the integral relation between the requirements of militant action and the economic needs of the masses» – a relation highlighted by the UNL in call no. 70, May 1st. Funds were channeled in a short – sighted and sometimes wrong way, instead of being invested in developing social and productive institutions to sustain the people's steadfastness and build the infrastructure of the declared State of Palestine.

Moreover, by spreading unrealistic expectations and offering concessions, without the prospects of attaining anything in return, PLO policy confused people and encouraged a return to the traditional attitude of waiting for the leadership outside to take the initiative. The inconsistent PLO policy also affected the Arab masses whose mobilization in support of the intifada began to dwindle after the first year (the situation in Jordan being one of few exceptions).

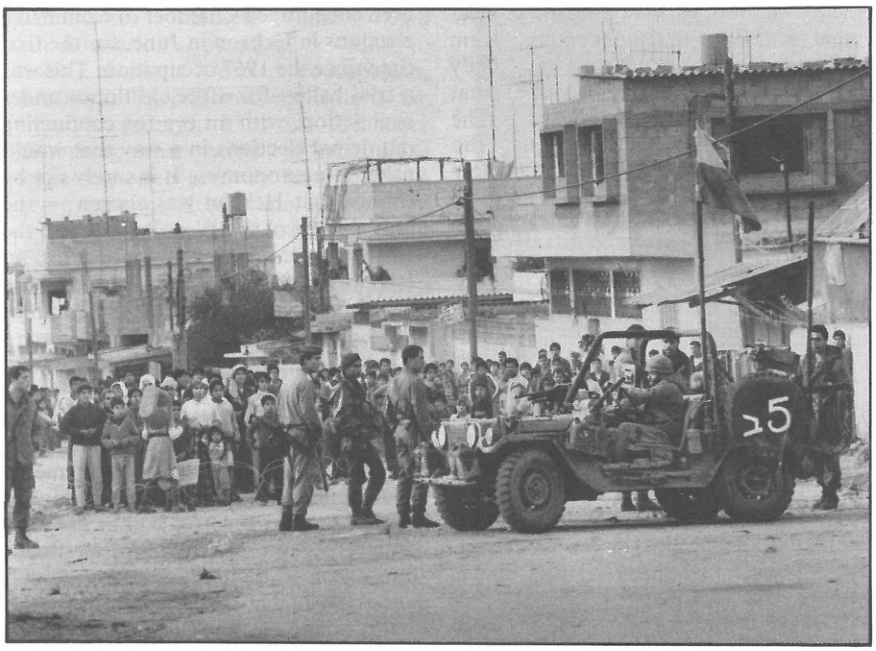
Meanwhile, the Israeli government's rejection of peace was predictably coupled with escalating repression. In addition to the murder of activists, the occupation authorities' arrest campaigns carved into the intifada's leadership and structure on the local level. In some places, less experienced cadres were left to guide the struggle. The gaps created by Zionist repression are part of the explanation for the emergence of incorrect practices and factional behavior in the ranks of the intifada itself.

Settlements mushroom

All the while an even more far – reaching attack on the intifada has been underway in the form of massive Soviet Jewish immigration to occupied Palestine, supplemented by the airlift of 14,000 Ethiopian Jews as the Mengistu regime crumbled. This influx has allowed the Shamir government to reinvigorate its settlement – building program, despite a patent lack of finances, in a new thrust to preempt an independent Palestinian state through more land – grabbing and demographic transformation.

Among other things, the Gulf war curfew on Palestinians served as a subterfuge for Israeli land surveyors with an eye for confiscation. The NGO Coordinating Committee in Jerusalem reported that at least 3,030 hectares of West Bank land were taken over by Israel in March and April alone, while another 4,000 hectares were closed off by the IDF for possible confiscation.

The Israeli Housing Ministry has operational plans aimed at fulfilling Sharon's seemingly wild pledges to double the number of settlements in the Golan Heights, settle one million Jews in



Shati camp, Gaza Strip, under curfew – *Tordai*

the Jerusalem district and up the Israeli population of the West Bank (now estimated at 100 – 105,000) by 50% in the near future. (The number of Israeli settlers in the Gaza Strip – now 4,500 – has already doubled since the start of the intifada.) The emphasis of the Zionist settlement plan is on enlarging existing settlements, particularly around Jerusalem, turning them into full – fledged cities. A prime example is the plan to expand Maale Adumim (current population 15,000) into a city of 50,000, as was reported by the Israeli daily *Haaretz* in late May. This entails confiscating land from Palestinian villages and camps on the eastern side of Jerusalem and hemming in the Palestinians residing in the Old City. The overall plan of the Housing Ministry, as described by *Yediot Ahronot,* June 28th, is to build 106,000 new housing units at 110 sites in the West Bank, covering 90,000 dunums of land, in the next few years.

Another tactic is building settlements which straddle the «green line,» erasing the distinction between 1948 – occupied Palestine and the Palestinian land occupied in 1967. If, in the future, Israel were to accept the principle of land for peace for tactical reasons – to get the Arabs to surrender – the new physical and demographic realities created would reduce the options to be negotiated. Resolving the Palestinian issue would be limited to the imposition of «autonomy» on the remaining pockets of Palestinians' presence in their own homeland. In call no. 72, the UNL described «the occupation's expansionist policy exemplified by the gradual annexation of parts of our state.»

The danger of the renewed settlement – building is not only to the 1967 occupied territories, but challenges the overall Palestinian claim to Palestine. The immigration wave will reinforce Israel economically and eventually militarily, especially in view of the high professional and technical skills of Soviet immigrants. This will bolster the Zionist state's position against future international pressure for withdrawal or addressing Palestinian rights.

The new immigration and settlement – building mean confiscation of West Bank and Gaza Strip land, fitting into the occupation authorities' current plan to starve out the intifada, making the economic situation so difficult that people will simply give up. This also means further marginalization of Palestinians residing in the Zionist state, with new land confiscations in areas such as the Galilee, where they still constitute a majority. Citing a report written in Israel, *CAABU Bulletin* of July 1st highlighted «Interior Ministry decisions which, in order to create space for new housing, expanded the Jewish settlement of Nazareth Ilit by 7,330 dunums at the expense of neighboring Arab villages and reduced the area of the large Arab village of Umm al Fahm by 500 dunums.»

Can the intifada be starved out?

The UNL has organized a series of activities in recent months specifically to oppose the settlement drive. Because Zionist plans target Jerusalem in particular, call no. 72 proposed a week of special activities for the capital of the State of Palestine, including mass marches from the West Bank to Jerusalem «to assert its Arab character and express our rejection of its being isolated from the rest of our state.» The UNL is referring to an impending Israeli plan to prohibit entry to Jerusalem to those Palestinians not possessing the required papers and permits on false security premises. This infringes on Palestinians' rights to attend religious rites at Al Aqsa and other holy sites; it would also prevent many from going to work. Roads from the North to the South of the West Bank pass through Jerusalem. A person living in Jenin, for example, would be unable to travel to Al Khalil (Hebron) for work or to visit family.

In call no. 71, June 1st, the UNL directly connects the Israeli policies of slicing up the land and economic warfare with the aim of ending the intifada via internal Palestinian conditions: «the Zionist authorities adopted the policy of imposing siege upon our people, divided our state into four parts, separated by semi – permanent military checkpoints, and used the stick – and – carrot policy in a new manner, in order to create social and economic differences among the classes and strata of the same people and among the several parts of the same country.»

The occupation authorities' attempt to have the intifada «die out by itself» dates back over a year, when the occupation forces began trying to avoid giant head – on confrontations with the people. Meanwhile, they intensified their deadly pursuit of intifada activists and tried to undermine the subsistence of the population at large via tax collection, excessive fines and fees, economic siege, etc. This policy climaxed in the 40 – day curfew during the Gulf war. In the aftermath, less than one – third of those who previously worked in Israel were able to return to their jobs, depriving West Bank and Gaza families of their main income, which cannot now be supplemented by family members working in the Gulf. Writing in *Al Fajr,* June 3rd English edition, Frank Collins predicted: «A decline of one – quarter to one – third in the Palestinian per capita income in the year 1991 is likely. In April, unemployment was as high as 40 to 50 percent, reducing many families to abject poverty.»

The continued closure of Palestinian ▶

universities is also part of the attack on the people's welfare and outlook for the future, and intends to lead them to despair. While Hebron and Bethlehem Universities have been allowed to reopen, these two benefit only a quarter of all the university students in the occupied territories. Moreover, three senior classes have graduated since the closures started in 1987, without the chance to enroll in higher education (*Al Fajr,* June 10th).

The failure of economic warfare to sap the intifada in the short run was clearly seen in the rise of militancy as the wartime curfew was lifted. The war of knives resumed and escalated; petrol bombs against Israeli targets are a daily affair; and the use of firearms has increased. Recently, it was reported on Israeli television that there were 53 gunfire or grenade attacks on Israeli targets from January to June this year, as opposed to 33 in the same months last year. There have been several armed attacks on soldiers and settlers in the West Bank, but the Gaza Strip became the real focus of the recent escalation. On July 1st, an Israeli soldier was shot and injured in Bureij camp. In the second week of July, PFLP militants operating in the Strip carried out three attacks on Zionist settlers and military targets, using firearms. In one of these operations, near Khan Younis, an Israeli officer, responsible for security in the South of the Strip, was seriously injured. The next week, PFLP militants attacked the military governor's headquarters in Rafah with hand grenades, injuring at least five Israeli personnel.

The problem remains, though, that neither courageous acts nor daily mass protests, even when well-planned and executed, can by themselves bring an immediate halt to the most formidable threats to the intifada's future – massive immigration, settlement – building and Israeli government intransigence. What can erode these phenomena in the long run is the steady empowerment of the people and construction of firm, popularly – oriented, alternative social and economic structures. This would enable radical escalation of the intifada until the Israeli polity sees that the occupied territories are ungovernable. The first two years of the intifada made substantive gains in this direction, but few comparable gains have been registered since. In some fields, hard-won ground was lost as is most apparent in the functioning of the various popular committees. Besides arrests, organizational factionalism and attacks on women have retarded the work of these committees, which are the key element in attaining real independence from the occupation's structures on a daily basis. The problem, in a nutshell, is that the intifada has lost the initiative. The current discussions reassessing the course of the intifada must focus on how it can regain its dynamics.

Test ballon for «autonomy»

The real danger of Israel's economic warfare on the occupied territories is that it is a ground-breaker for injecting political conspiracies, with the occupation authorities banking on exploiting internal problems in the intifada. Into the pool of popular desperation they hope to have created, the Israeli authorities have begun throwing their bait – softening some economic restrictions, with a distinct class bias. For example, they have granted more operating permits to Palestinian entrepreneurs per month recently than they normally do in a whole year; these entrepreneurs will enjoy tax exemptions for three years – a real departure from usual occupation policy (*The Other Israel,* May – June).

In this context, one understands why the occupation authorities allowed and even encouraged Chamber of Commerce elections in Hebron in June, for the first time since the 1967 occupation. This was a trial ballon for «free elections» under occupation, with an eye for conducting municipal elections in a way that would usher in «autonomy.» It is surely not by chance that Hebron was chosen – the only district of the West Bank where the Israeli government could hope for an Islamic victory to detract from the people's united adherence to the PLO. In the elections, all candidates were screened by the occupation forces; the Islamic list won six seats, while the pro-PLO bloc attained four; one independent was elected. The PFLP and DFLP both issued statements condemning these elections, and the explosion of two petrol bombs near the polling station attested to Palestinian opposition to the political aims of such «exercises in democracy.»

In call no. 71, the UNL had called on the masses to confront the occupation's attempts to make use of suspicious personages in Chamber of Commerce elections. It stipulated that such elections should be held according to a national decision and under national supervision. Notably, the Gaza Chamber of

Commerce refused the civil administration's proposal in May to hold elections under occupation, because of the political implications. On this background, it is all the more disturbing that some of the PLO leadership appeared to have given a green light for Hebron merchants to go to the polls. The need for a clear – cut PLO policy on such issues is made more urgent by the fact that the occupation authorities are continuing this attempt, coupling the offer of elections with economic incentives. On July 2nd, there was a meeting between civil administration officials and Jericho merchants about such matters.

Moreover, the occupation authorities are inching towards the political aspect of their plan. Call no. 72, July 1st, noted that agents previously appointed as mayors, after Israel dissolved the elected municipal councils, are now being replaced by new faces «in an attempt to restore the authority of the occupation on these councils once again... The UNL reiterates its established position of rejecting appointment in principle... The problem of the councils can only be solved by restoring all the elected councils, pending suitable circumstances that allow us to conduct new elections in which freedom of expression and choice is guaranteed – removed from the occupation authorities.» The UNL called on the people to confront the phenomenon of appointments and prohibited accepting them.

Self – sufficiency: Poultry – raising coop in Shufat camp, near Jerusalem.

Reassessment

Due to the flagging of the intifada's initiative, serious debate is underway both in the occupied territories and in the ranks of the Palestinian organizations in exile. The calls of the UNL have lately included increasingly direct references to improper behavior that must be stopped. Call no. 72 warned of «attempts to abort the intifada and rob it of its militant substance, by associating it with some wrongdoings...»

In June, a number of prominent Palestinians in the occupied territories publicly called for reassessment. Most notable were the calls of Faysel Husseini, Riyadh Malki and Zahira Kamal, because they are associated with the three major organizations of the PLO – Fatah, PFLP and DFLP, respectively; all three are prominent in the work of national institutions in the occupied territories, and have been among those to meet with Secretary of State Baker.

Faysel Husseini noted that he had pointed to the dangers surrounding the intifada one and a half years ago, especially the attempt to militarize it. He called for rebuilding the economic and educational structures of the intifada, restoring its popular character and reviving the village and neighborhood committees based on criteria of efficiency, rather than factionalism between the UNL organizations.

Riyadh Malki stressed reassessing the intifada so as to guarantee its continuity with the participation of all the national movement in the broadest sense. He called for criticism and self – criticism, to insure that mistakes are corrected and a new program drawn up to develop the intifada.

Zahira Kamal identified the serious problems the intifada is undergoing with the national movement's failure to carry out a program capable of facing up to the occupation. She pointed to the negative effects of factionalism. In her view, the transformation of the intifada into military groups has led to its decline, by reverting to the model of individual heroism rather than collective action.

The calls of the UNL have consistently stressed ending factionalism in favor of national unity as the key to resolving the intifada's problems. In call no. 70, this was related to the need «to rectify the course of the Palestinian struggle via providing the intifada with the means of continuing, enhancing its internal and external influence, escalating its activities, strengthening its capacity and dynamism of linkage...» The same call designated this year as a year of construction wherein all capacities should be devoted to re – constructing and developing Palestinian economic, educational and social institutions. The UNL also stressed the need to provide jobs for workers barred from Israel, at the same time encouraging workers to «return to the land, increase agricultural production and confirm steadfastness on our land...» It called for reviving several pursuits which have been lax in the past year, particularly the boycott of Israeli goods (for which there are Palestinian substitutes), local production and popular education.

Successive calls condemn those who use political action as a cover for serving their own personal or family interests. Call no. 71 stressed rehabilitating ▶

relations with the masses who, via organization in the bodies of the intifada, should «participate in the decision – making process...» This means «rejecting bureaucratic ways of dealing with the masses, activating their role and responding to their demands, because they are the great power of determination that keeps the intifada going on.»

Call no. 71 also banned the wearing of masks when dealing with the masses, as one of a number of measures aimed to end undisciplined behavior, including «to stop acts of kidnapping, interrogation and killing unless there is agreement among the various Palestinian organizations to do so...» This is part of the move to restore the intifada's campaign against colla – borators to its original principled basis, which aimed to neutralize or eliminate, if necessary, those who worked with the occupation authorities and thus damaged the popular struggle.

Masks were originally donned by intifada activists who knew they were wanted by the occupation forces, in an attempt to avoid arrest while remaining active in the mass struggle. However, as the Zionist policy against the intifada evolved, relying more and more on undercover operations to arrest and kill militants, the wearing of masks had to be reconsidered. Thus, the ban on wearing masks among the masses also aims to guard against the attacks of the Israeli Shin Bet. Palestinians in the occupied territories and human rights organizations have long been reporting assassinations carried out by undercover agents. A few years ago, the Israeli authorities revoked the press credentials of two Western journalists who reported on Israeli death squads in the occupied territories. However, on June 21st, the truth – or rather part of it – was broadcast on Israeli television in a short documentary showing soldiers dressing as Arabs, sometimes as women, in order to approach and arrest intifada activists. At about the same time, a masked intifada activist was shot by another masked man in Kafr Malik, near Ramallah. Also in June, the PHRIC in Jerusalem published a list of 47 Palestinians killed by Israeli undercover agents. The author of the report, Lee O'Brien, wrote that the great majority of the victims were engaged in activities such as writing slogans on the walls, when they were killed.

The role of Palestinians outside

Though the national movement in occupied Palestine is best qualified to formulate solutions to most of the intifada's current problems, it cannot alone resolve them in practice. In fact, part of the background of the current crisis is the mistaken assumption that the intifada alone could achieve its goals, even if these were restricted to ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The PLO and all Palestinian revolutionary organizations outside the homeland must shoulder the main responsibility not only for substantially upping financial and military support to the occupied territories, but also for ending factionalism and redressing the imbalance between the leadership inside and outside. The time has come for the Palestinian leadership inside (the UNL) to gain relative autonomy, making day – to – day decisions itself, based on PNC decisions and overall PLO directives. In the context of reforming the PLO and forming a new PNC, serious consideration should be given to increasing the representation of Palestinians in the occupied territories, commensurate to their role in the struggle.

In a communique issued June 14th in Damascus, the PFLP's Politbureau called for making the development of the intifada a top priority: «However, this task cannot be carried out by wishful thinking or focusing on minor aspects of the intifada, as many Palestinian forces and nationalist personalities are trying to do right now. Rather, there must be hard and responsible work to back the intifada by more vital means, and a responsible, revolutionary and daring process of self – criticism that highlights the primary issue, because we think that the outside is mainly responsible for providing the intifada with the means of continuation and development.» It has become quite clear that the obstacles that hamper the intifada's progress stem not only from the brutal policies and practices of the Zionist entity; but also from the wrong policies and practices of the dominant circles of the PLO leadership and of the various Palestinian organizations as well.» Besides calling for rectification of the PLO's political line and practice, and an end to the organizational factionalism that has alienated the masses and reduced their participation in the intifada, the PFLP Politbureau advocated: «Developing a comprehensive national economic policy to back the economy inside [the occupied territories], by putting all the capacities of the PLO and the Palestinian people worldwide at the disposal of this policy, and by investing the little aid extended by some Arab brothers and other friends to the same end.»

Intifada as the center

The importance of coupling concrete solutions to the intifada's problems with political rectification is dramatically highlighted by the emergence of some very incorrect responses to the current crisis. Prime among these is the declaration of the so – called Palestinian National Unity Party (PNUP) in Ramallah, by Kamal Tabanji, based on negation of the Palestinian national liberation movement's past and principles. This party proclaims that the role of the PLO and armed struggle has expired. Instead it calls for direct negotiations with Israel, relying on forging close ties with the US and asking Jordan to reverse its decision to severe ties with the West Bank. What appears to distinguish this party is that it encompasses a number of Palestinians who have served long terms in Israeli prisons, in addition to some West Bank professionals. But the PNUP's real promoter is Salah Al Khalili, a Fatah official who resides in London, where he intends to ply his contacts with the British and US governments.

The dangers of this tendency are manifest. Not only does it violate principles long upheld by Palestinian freedom fighters and the masses alike; it addresses false problems. The current problems of the intifada and the overall weakness of the Palestinian cause is not due to the employment of armed struggle as a necessary instrument for change. Rather these problems stem from shortcomings in terms of political clarity, a firmly embedded mass line and finding new ways of practicing revolutionary violence to bolster the popular struggle. Instead of addressing these problems, the tendency represented by the PNUP brings new divisiveness to the Palestinian arena. It moreover plays into the hands of the Israeli and US governments who have long sought an alternative to the PLO.

Dealing with the current problems must begin with recognition of the centrality of the intifada in the national liberation struggle to fulfill Palestinian rights, and building on the experience of this struggle, as was expressed by the UNL in call no. 70: «... a comprehensive, just solution of the Palestinian question cannot be achieved through the proposed negotiations only, in the absence of struggle in the field, which is the spearhead of political activity... the political and militant processes are organically and dialectically linked.» ●

Strikes in Zionist Prisons

The struggle of the 17,000 Palestinians currently imprisoned in Zionist jails escalated markedly in the recent period, protesting in particular the tightened repressive measures imposed during and after the Gulf war. The appeal issued by the prisoners in Asqalan, after they began an open – ended visit strike on May 6th, gives a picture of the deteriorating conditions (see box).

Given that approximately 40,000 Palestinians currently pass through Israeli prisons and detention centers each year, the prisoners' struggle is virtually inseparable from the ongoing intifada. In the wake of the Gulf war, solidarity with the political prisoners has been a main focus of the popular movement's activities with Palestinian lawyers, relatives, women's committees and others organizing numerous sit – ins, press conferences, etc., to press for their demands.

On June 23rd, the 280 political prisoners in Nafha, located in the desert of South Palestine, began a hunger strike protesting ill treatment by the Zionist prison authorities. They were immediately joined by Palestinian prisoners in Asqalan and Ramleh jails, striking for demands similar to those originally put forward in the Asqalan appeal. Conditions are particularly severe in Nafha prison due to the climate. The general increase in illness in many prisons, due to worsening conditions and medical negligence, is aggravated in Nafha where temperatures may exceed 40 degrees. Nafha prisoners, like those in Ansar III, have special difficulties receiving visitors due to the location of the prisons and the occupation authorities' restrictions.

The Nafha strike sparked solidarity strikes of varying durations in Hebron, Ansar III, Nablus Central Prison, Tulkarm, Jenin, Kfar Youna and other prisons. In all, about 15,000 detainees took part in the action.

Only after 16 days of the hunger strike did the prison authorities show signs of readiness to concede to the prisoners' demands. With mediation by Palestinian lawyers and Israeli human rights activists, a meeting was arranged between the prisoners' representatives and the authorities, where the latter agreed to 17 of the prisoners' demands. According to Ali Ghuzlan, head of the Arab Lawyers Committee, the most important achievement was the prison authorities' promise to appoint a doctor in the prison; the second most important demand fulfilled was the authorities' agreement to move asbestos away from the windows. He explained, «Among the prisoners, 170 wear glasses because of the continuous light in the rooms and the absence of healthy ventilation» (*Al Fajr*, July 15th). The authorities also pledged to return those prisoners who had been isolated back to the main part of the prison. Other demands fulfilled included: improving food, hygenic conditions and ventilation; providing new clothing for the prisoners; allowing them to receive newspapers and books, to move from cell to cell and to pray. The effect of this was basically restoring the pre – war conditions – demands gained from previous prison struggles. Moreover, visiting time was extended from one half hour to 45 minutes. However, the overall problem of detainees from the 1967 occupied territories receiving family visits in prisons where they are held in the 1948 occupied area, remains unresolved. This being related to overall occupation policy, we can expect future strikes and struggle to resolve this issue. ●

Prisoners' Appeal

Appeal from the prisoners of the Palestinian revolution in Asqalan Prison, May 1991, distributed by *Al Quds* (Jerusalem) Press Office, May 22nd.

To our heroic people in the occupied territories, to all strugglers against racism, slavery and oppression, we address these words to our people to move the human conscience to support our just and human cause...

The savage Israeli onslaught launched by the general prison administration against the Palestinian prisoners in all prisons and detention centers has intensified. Besides the policy of starvation and slow liquidation due to medical negligence and other oppressive measures, the Israeli authorities have now denied our relatives from the West Bank and Gaza Strip access to Israeli detention centers which are located inside the so – called green line, thereby depriving them of visiting us, in compliance with the Israeli decision which prevents the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip from entering the 1948 areas and East Jerusalem without special permits.

For the past six months our families have been unable to reach their sons who are held in Asqalan prison, Nafha, Shatta, Ramleh and Telmond. In the light of this policy, we the Palestinian prisoners inside Asqalan prison, decided to start an open – ended visit strike until the inhumane and unethical isolation of prisoners is terminated.

We would like to add that the Israeli authorities have violated the Geneva conventions regarding the treatment of prisoners, since detainees from the occupied territories are being held in detention centers inside the green line...Thus we beseech all the institutions concerned with human rights and the national institutions in the occupied territories to support us and our just human demands. We call upon you to publicize our protest demands and uncover the inhumane practices against prisoners. We demand that the Red Cross intervene to solve this problem.

Following is a list of the other arbitrary practices by the prison administration against the prisoners: (1) Prisoners are banned from addressing any political issues during the Friday oration. (2) National celebrations are completely banned. (3) [There is] an attempt to cancel the detainees' representation.

The prisoners concluded their appeal by listing means whereby the Israeli prison authorities are enacting their program, including a qualitative and quantitative reduction of food rations; deterioration of health conditions; and reduced supplies of clothing and cleaning agents. In addition, prisoners are strip – searched upon entering or leaving the prison, while the use of punishments such as beating, solitary confinement, repression and psycho – logical pressure has been increased. The authorities have also tried to reschedule relatives' visits so that they fall on days other than Friday, which is the weekly holiday and day – off from work. Male visitors from the West Bank and Gaza Strip are being prevented from visiting relatives in detention centers inside the green line. ●

The Struggle of a

Palestinian Village

This was sent to us from the occupied State of Palestine by a friend who is currently living and working in the West Bank.

Six kilometers southeast of Nablus, tucked among the rolling hills of the West Bank, lies Awarta, a village of 4,000 residents, which I visited on May 8th. As the entrance to the village has been blocked by the Israeli army with piles of rocks and soil, and in order to avoid any possible army checkpoint, we decided to take a roundabout route to the village. This road winds through terraced hills dotted with olive trees and a wheat field, all of which belongs to the village of Awarta. The village owns 16,000 dunums of land, the produce of which is the main source of income for the villagers. In addition, some villagers work as teachers in nearby Nablus or as construction labourers in Israel.

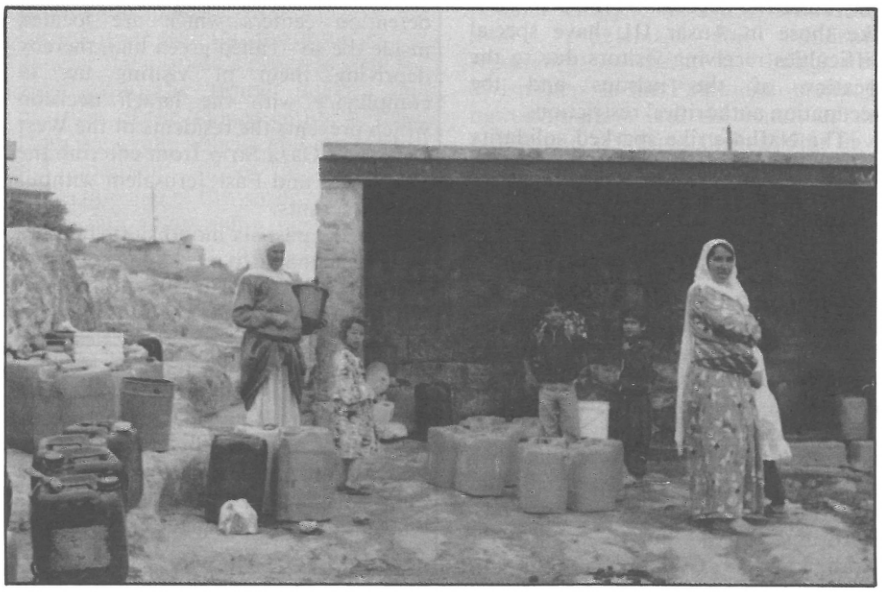
Before the intifada, Awarta had been a traditionally «quiet» village, where only a small group of people were politically active. These days, the village is known as well-organized and militant. Awarta is a major stronghold of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (all the intifada graffiti in the village is signed by this group) and a battlefront against the Israeli occupation. It is an example of a village in which an effective alternative structure of local control has emerged. Early in the Palestinian popular uprising, the local political leadership established new procedures regulating daily life, and popular committees brought a measure of local control. Every villager can tell you the story of one of the four mukhtars of the village. Notorious for tricking the people out of their money by promising to improve living conditions in the village, and for giving the names of intifada activists to the Israeli Shin Bet, he was ordered by the community to come to the local mosque to confess his crimes and to renounce his traitorous behaviour. When he refused, the *shabab* put him under house arrest. Once a month, he was allowed to visit Nablus from 8 am until 1 pm. In the morning, the *shabab* put him in a taxi, and the same taxi driver drove him back to the village in the afternoon. This went on for months; the mukhtar was repeatedly asked to come to the mosque. He never went. The man still lives in the village, but is totally isolated and controlled by the community. On other occasions, the popular committees settled disputes in the village, decided that the taxi fare from Awarta to Nablus was to be reduced, that shops were allowed to remain open all day, except on general strike days declared by the Unified National Leadership. All decisions of the popular committees and local leadership are made public via the mosque loudspeaker or notices posted on the wall of the mosque.

Health care is provided by the Union of Health Work Committees (formerly the Union of Popular Committees for Health Services). They run the only clinic in the village. Daily, a doctor and nurse come to Awarta to render medical services to the people. Activists of the Palestinian Women's Committees teach literacy, embroidery and sewing classes to the women and girls of Awarta.

The old part of the village, where small, meter-thick stone houses still stand, is being renovated, and the houses are made available to newly wed couples. In one of these houses, some youths have begun to raise poultry, following the directives of the Unified National Leadership to strive for self-sufficiency. There has been electricity in the village for the past five years, but there is no running water and residents collect their water in wells and cisterns. When the wells run dry, trucks carrying large water tanks come to the village to refill them.

The Israeli occupation authorities are using control of water supplies to make the population dependent and submissive. This is what was attempted during the 33-day-long siege of Awarta after the Gulf war. When the war broke out on January 17th, the village was subjected to the 24-hour blanket curfew imposed throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, unlike other parts of the occupied Palestinan lands, the curfew was not lifted after the war. In fact, the village was surprised by a military raid on February 25th, during which the curfew was prolonged for another 33 days! According to one of the villagers, this collective punishment was in response to their cheering and singing in support of Saddam Hussein during the war. While settlers of the nearby settlement, Tel Hayyim, took refuge in their sealed rooms wearing gas masks, the people of Awarta (who were denied gas masks anyway) took to the streets, chanting and whistling. This act, together with the fact that Tel Hayyim's telephone lines and water supplies had been cut – allegedly by *shabab* from Awarta – infuriated the settlers who demanded, and got,

Awarta families collecting water from cisterns



revenge. The collective punishment of the village was immediate, brutal and sustained. Soldiers entered the village almost daily, making arrests and beating people, breaking into homes, smashing furniture and windows. «However, as the curfew continued,» say the villagers, «the morale in the village strengthened.» Due to the effective alternative local control and organization in the village, the people were able to cope with the situation. Food supplies were divided equitably; wood was used as fuel for cooking; meat, fresh fruits and vegetables were foresworn and people ate only what was necessary for survival.

The problem, however, was the shortage of water and overflowing sewage since no trucks were allowed in to supply the village with water or to empty the sewers. Furthermore, the Union of Health Work Committees was not allowed to operate their clinic and the two schools in the village, one for boys and one for girls, remained closed. In addition, none of the 400 Awarta residents with jobs in Israel were allowed to go to work for the duration. Even now, more than three months after the war, only 10% of these 400 workers have received permission from the Israeli «civil administration» to go back to their work in Israel.

The villagers report extensive damage as a result of the curfew, with serious implications for the future because of the prohibition on working the land or tending livestock. For example, they were unable to prune their trees and 400 sheep died because the owners could not feed or water them.

When the curfew was finally lifted in the beginning of April, the soldiers left the village only to come back every few days to harass and humiliate the villagers. On April 5th, two days after the curfew was lifted, a massive arrest campaign was carried out in the early morning during which 40 people were arrested. At the time of this writing, in early June, only 10 of them have been released. At the end of April, soldiers again enterd the village and set up camp on the roof of a house opposite the girls' school. The next day, a van with West Bank licence plates drove into the village. The men inside, Israeli Shin Bet agents, were dressed in traditional Palestinian clothes. The van came to a halt near a house which is used as a hide-out by «wanted» *shabab.* The moment the men jumped out of the van, the soldiers on the roof top started shooting in the direction of the hide-out. As the girls' school was in their line of fire, six girls were injured, one of them seriously. The men from the van succeeded in arresting one «wanted» youth. The rest managed to escape into the mountains.

The night I was there, on May 8th, the soldiers raided the village another time and arrested two youths. At approximately 1:30 am, Umm Ahmad entered my room and told me to get up as «the soldiers are in the village.» At first, I thought that a huge thunderstorm had broken out but then I realized that the air was filled with the deafening noise of sound grenades. The soldiers were only 20 meters away and we were all waiting in anxious anticipation. What if the soldiers came to our house? One of Umm Ahmad's sons is «wanted» by the occupation authorities and even though they know that he is not staying at home, the soldiers might just raid the house to harass his family. Umm Ahmad's family has a history of resisting the occupation: one son is currently in prison, still awaiting trial after spending more than a year and a half behind bars, while another son has already served time in prison at the beginning of the intifada. We could see the soldiers entering a neighbour's house and coming out with two young men. The next day we learned that they were arrested and taken to an army camp near the village. While arresting the two youths, soldiers had thrown a sound grenade into the house, which burnt the upholstery of an arm chair. In addition, furniture was destroyed and a radio-cassette player smashed to pieces. Umm Ahmad's family was lucky that night, the soldiers never came...

Before we left the village, I was taken to the road which is used by the settlers of Tel Hayyim. The settlement was founded in 1985, and the road leading to it crosses Awarta's fields. Much land belonging to the villagers was declared «State Land» at that time and confiscated in order to build this settlement. Currently, Awarta is threatened with the expropriation of an additional 1,900 dunums, on top of the 4,000 dunums of olive orchards confiscated in the past. On both sides of the settlers' road, hundreds of olive trees were uprooted on the pretext that stones were thrown from this area. It was a sad thing to see....

When I returned to Awarta, on June 1st, I was invited to watch a military march by the strike forces of the intifada in the village. More than 250 masked *shabab,* commemorating the anniversary of the martyrdom of Mohamad Khawaja, were marching through the village. Mohamad Khawaja was a member of the PFLP, killed by Israeli torturers during interrogation in Ramallah prison on June 1, 1976. Awarta was covered with his picture, Palestinian flags and graffiti commemorating this great Palestinian fighter.

The village of Awarta has already given its share of blood and tears to the Palestinian popular uprising. However, my visit convinced me that the people of Awarta are continuing their struggle and resistance against the Israeli occupation and its policy of repression and destruction.

The intifada is for all Palestinians.

Why Anti – Zionism

In continuation of our series about the Palestinian right of return and the concept of a secular, democratic Palestine, we print the following contribution sent to us by Dr. Uri Davis in May.

by Uri Davis, May 1991

The continued existence of the State of Israel in the next decade is not secure. This is the case, not because of a fiction of anti – Semitic gentile hatred of anything Jewish, but because the political pretensions of political Zionism can not be realised except through the means of mass expulsion and continued occupation. Such policies are unstable cornerstones for any political and state system, so much more so for a political and state system whose economic foundation is flawed. The fragility of the pretensions of political Zionism and its weakness are apparent today on the surface. This article has been written in the shadow of the danger of a devastating war in the region. The lie of the Zionist claim that the State of Israel as a Jewish state is a solution to the Holocaust is evident today for all to see: the state that was purportedly established in order to rescue Jews from gas chambers almost celebrated its anniversary with the face of its citizens covered with gas masks.

The State of Israel is the strongest military power in the Middle East; yet, it is a power whose political and social foundations are unstable and its material base forever on the verge of collapse. A relatively small change of the balance of power in the region or in the international political climate is sufficient to cause real damage to the capability of the State of Israel to sustain the political agenda which is at the basis of its existence, namely, to sustain the effort required to guarantee a demographic majority for such of its inhabitants as are recognised by the State as Jews.

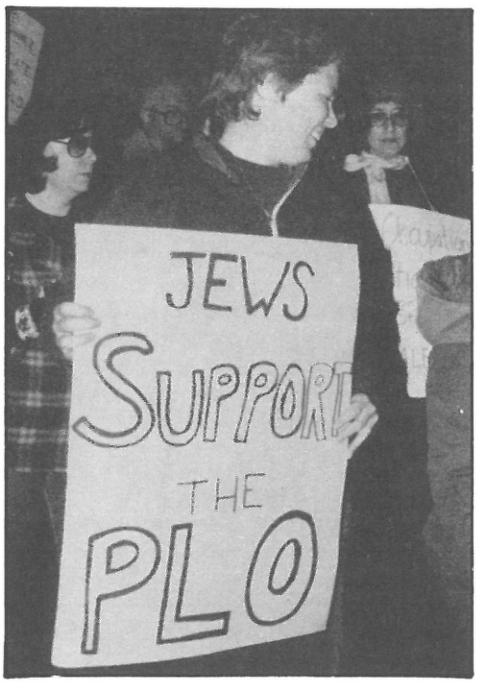
The hegemonious ideological perspective in the State of Israel is the political Zionist perspective. It is possible to focus the political pretension of political Zionism at its aspiration to establish and secure the continued existence of a sovereign Jewish State in Palestine where a demographic majority be guaranteed for such of its residents whose citizenship is Jewish (Israeli), whose nationality is Jewish (according to the Israeli Law of Return, 1950) and whose religion is Jewish (offsprings of a Jewish mother or properly converted to Judaism by orthodox procedure). Neturei Karta, for instance, were correct when they argued that this political aspiration is a crime: an original sin, in orthodox religious terms, the work of the devil. And the secular critics of political Zionism were right in their argument that the aspiration to establish a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine can not be realized in a world of human beings who wish to found their political and social existence in democratic values; that the attempt to establish a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine necessarily leads to policies based on crimes against humanity (e.g. transfer 1948), continued occupation (e.g. Galilee 1948, West Bank 1967) and a regime of apartheid racism.

Indeed it was clear to all who had eyes to see that the attempt to establish a sovereign Jewish state in 1948 in the territories allocated by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, recommending a Partition Plan for Palestine where half of the population was Muslim and Christian, was an attempt that necessarily invites false solutions of mass expulsion: transfer. The representatives of the Palestinian Arab people and the governments of the Arab states were right in their opposition to the UN Partition Plan of 1947.

The State of Israel as formulated in the UN Partition Plan of November 1947 was not designated to be a Jewish State in its political Zionist meaning, namely, a state with a guaranteed demographic Jewish majority. The State of Israel was designated in the said UN resolution to be a bi – national state, and likewise the State of Palestine which was to be established alongside the State of Israel by force of the same resolution. Despite the mass expulsion of the Palestinian Arab people, which was carried out under the cover of the 1948 war, the State of Israel is not a Jewish state. It is a bi – national state.

* Some 17% of the citizens of the State of Israel are Palestinian Arabs (approx. 750,000).
* Some 30% of the inhabitants of the territory of Mandate Palestine who are under Israeli rule (approx. 2,000,000) are organised in the framework of the intifada against the occupation and declare in their vast majority that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is their sole legitimate representative.
* Some 30% of the total of the Palestinian Arab people who are defined by the laws of the State of Israel as «absentees,» namely, refugees and deportees (approx. 2,000,000) are organised in the framework of the PLO in order to implement their right to return and live in all parts of their homeland, either as citizens of the State of Palestine or as citizens of the State of Israel, or as inhabitants of dual citizenship.

The efforts to secure the continued existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish State in its political Zionist meaning, namely,



Mr. Perez De Cuellar, General Secretary United Nations
New York, N.Y.
Dear Mr. De Cuellar,
As a board member of a NGO on the Question of Palestine, accredited by the United Nations, I was quite shocked when I read about your statement of 13 May 1991 criticizing the General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism.
I am myself a Jew born in Palestine in 1941. For many of us Jews it is clear as sunshine at noon that Zionism is a racist ideology and that the State of Israel is a racist Apartheid state. I join hereby two documents supporting my claim: A statement denouncing Zionism and supporting Palestinian rights, signed by some three hundred Jews, mostly intellectuals, writers and scholars; and an article published recently in the Israeli respectable daily paper *Ha'aretz* by a Jewish Israeli, Urzi Ornan, concerning the Israeli apartheid legislation and practice. In addition Dr. Uri Davis, a veteran Israeli champion of human rights, who is now living in Britain and teaches in Exeter University, has published a book *Israel: An Apartheid State* and published by Zed Books, London.
There are more and more Jews who understand now that the State of Israel cannot be democratic and Jewish at the same time. Either it is the State of those professing the Jewish religion in the world or the State of its inhabitants, regardless of religion and ethnicity. This awareness is reflected in the growing number of writings by Jews and Israelis on this subject.
Your statement of 13 May is therefore a heavy blow against democracy and justice for my homeland. I hope it is based on a temporary misperception and that you will continue to firmly uphold, conforming to your mandate, resolutions of the General Assembly.

Sincerely yours,
Elias Davidsson, composer

Reykjavik, 5.7.1991

a state with a guaranteed demographic Jewish majority, must be rejected from a moral point of view, because it is based on racism, and is not valid from a practical point of view, because it is destined to fail.

The United Nations defines racism (racial discrimination) in Article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: «In this Convention, the term, *racial discrimination,* shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life» (Article 1, General Assembly Resolution 2106 A (XX), 21 December 1965).

In the State of Israel as a sovereign Jewish state in its political Zionist meaning the cornerstones of Knesset legislation are racist. For instance: The Absentees Property Law on the one part and the Law of Return on the second part (1950) are designed to guarantee a demographic majority of citizens of Jewish origin, and deny citizenship to the inhabitants of the country whose origin is Arab (Muslim and Christian). The Jewish National Fund Law (1953), Israel Lands Laws (1960) and the Covenant between the government of Israel and the Jewish National Fund (1961) reserve 92% of the total land area of the State of Israel in its 1967 boundaries for settlement, development and lease to such inhabitants and citizens as are of Jewish origin only.

It is proper to call a spade a spade: this is racialist, apartheid legislation.

We ought not blind our eyes with vain casuistry: is the meaning of «Jewish origin» Jewish religious origin, or national origin or ethnic origin and what is exactly the subtle difference between discrimination on the basis of religion, nationality or ethnicity? Racial discrimination is not discrimination on the basis of skin colour. Racial discrimination is discrimination also on the basis of skin colour and also on the basis of origin (offspring of a Jewish mother) and also on the basis of ethnic origin (Ashkenazi versus Sefardi). This obtains in the language of human beings who are committed to a universal value system. Human beings who wish to evade or exclude themselves from this commitment can do so only by way of serious violation of the principles of intellectual moral integrity, pretending that the profound discrimination between a person recognised in law by the state as Jewish versus a person not recognised by the state as Jewish is not racial discrimination because it is «colour blind».

There obtains a correct consensus in the peace camp in Israel against the occupation, against the continued Zionist settlement in the territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war, for Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories, for an international peace conference under UN auspices with the participation of all parties concerned with the Israeli – Palestinian conflict, including the PLO on equal footing. Opposition to the occupation and support for the Palestinian intifada are cornerstones for any relevant critical position regarding the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. But contrary to the view of many in the peace camp in Israel, the root of the solution to the conflict and the root of the solution to the profound structural discrimination in the State of Israel between those recognised by the State as Jewish versus those who are not recognised as Jewish is not found in the principle of political and territorial separation between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine. The root of the solution can be found in the first instance in a clear and unequivocal distinction between three categories:

- One legal: citizenship
- One political: nationality
- One confessional: religion

The political pretension of political Zionism was to establish a state with a guaranteed demographic Jewish majority; a state where the majority of its citizens have Jewish (Israeli) citizenship, Jewish nationality and Jewish religion. Such political pretensions as conceived by political Zionism can be maintained – and then not for a very long period – only on the basis of racist apartheid legislation and a regime of occupation. Any democratic alternative must distinguish emphatically and clearly between citizenship, nationality and religion.

The State of Israel in whatever boundaries never was and never will be a single nationality state. The future of the State of Israel is contestable, but if it has a political democratic future at all in the next decade, let alone in the next century, then it is a future as a bi – national state without the guarantee of a demographic majority for such of its inhabitants as are defined today by the state as Jewish. The most feverish dreams of transfer in the minds of Kahanists (followers of the assassinated Rabbi Meir Kahane's Kach party) and Zeevists (followers of Rehavam Zeevi's Moledet party) or others will not alter the destiny of the State of Israel as a bi – national state. Any attempt to realise such criminal nightmares of transfer will fail. ▶

In order to make the relevant distinction between citizenship, nationality and religion, and in order to posit this distinction as a cornerstone for a moral, intellectual and political opposition struggle inside and outside the State of Israel, it is necessary to maintain a consistent conceptual and linguistic distinction between the relevant political regime (the State of Israel) and the relevant political territory (the land of Palestine).

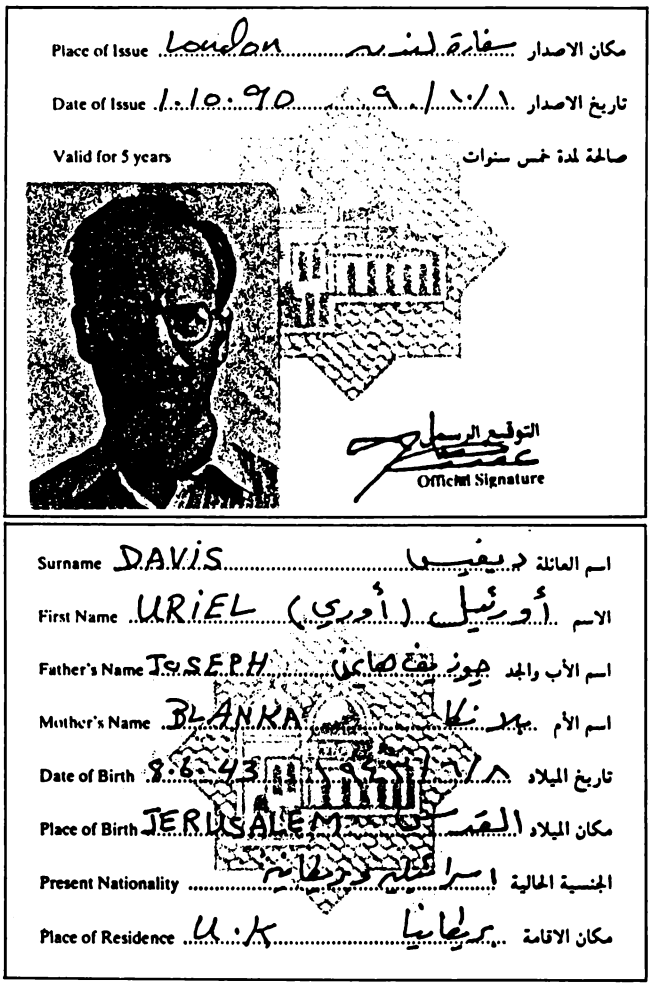
In the bi – national and Zionist State of Israel today, some 85% of the Palestinian Arab people are defined under Knesset legislation as not human beings (Absentees) and/or as subjects of a military occupation regime; 15% of the Palestinian Arab people are citizens of the State of Israel who are subject to apartheid legislation; 92% of the territory under Israeli sovereignty in the 1948 – 1967 boundaries are reserved for settlement, development and lease to such of the inhabitants of the state as are recognised by law as Jews only.

On the basis of the ideological assumptions of political Zionism, a state of Israel that is bi – national and democratic is a contradiction in terms. The aim of political Zionist ideology and practice is to *guarantee* a Jewish demographic majority in the State of Israel. A state of Israel that is bi – national and democratic, and is not based on the ideological assumptions of political Zionism, must oppose any aspiration to guarantee a demographic majority of any kind whatsoever, let alone Jewish demographic majority. In a state of Israel that is bi – national and democratic all inhabitants are Israeli citizens. Some are of Palestinian – Hebrew nationality and some are of Palestinian – Arab nationality. The religion of the inhabitants (Palestinian Hebrews and Arabs) is Christian, Muslim, Jewish or no religion. Such a state of Israel is in the view of this author a fiction, and does not, therefore, have a future of separate existence, and definitely not in the long term. It is destined to unite with a State of Palestine that is bi – national and democratic, and one can only hope that such re – union will take place through a political process analogous to the process of reunification of Germany.

In 1988 the Palestine National Council (PNC) declared the establishment of the State of Palestine subject to the UN Charter and UN Partition Resolution of 1947. On the basis of the political and ideological assumptions of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, a State of Palestine that is bi – national and democratic, either in the boundaries allocated by the UN Partition Plan of 1947 alongside the State of Israel or in the borders of the territories of Mandate Palestine, is not a contradiction in terms and is, therefore, not a fiction but a relevant political possibility indeed.

In a State of Palestine that is bi – national and democratic all inhabitants are Palestinian citizens. Some are of Palestinian – Hebrew nationality and some are of Palestinian – Arab nationality. The religion of the inhabitants (Palestinian Hebrews and Arabs) is Christian, Muslim, Jewish or no religion.

The President of the State of Palestine is the Chairman of the PLO, Yasir Arafat and the office of the president ordered the establishment of a Registry Department to register the Palestinian population and issue Palestinian identity cards and family books. A facsimile of a Palestinian identity card is reproduced below. The official translator of the identity card made an error in the English translation of the category of citizenship (*jinsiyya* in Arabic). The correct translation is «citizenship» not «nationality». Also the official designer of the document made an error and designed the document with the religious emblem of two of the three monotheistic religions relevant to Palestine (church and mosque – synagogue is lacking). An identity card is a secular document and one ought not decorate it with any religious symbols whatsoever. These errors can be corrected when the Palestinian Constituent Assembly is convened and the State of Palestine established in fact on the territory of the land of Palestine. But this document, its deficiencies notwithstanding, also testifies to the democratic superiority of the Palestinian perspective. A State of Palestine that is bi – national and democratic is not a contradiction in terms. And it is possible even today to issue a Palestinian identity card to a person who is of dual Israeli and British citizenship, of Palestinian – Hebrew nationality and of Jewish religion.



Dr. Uri Davis, Honorary Research Fellow in Palestine Studies, Department of Politics, University of Exeter, UK; Director, Jerusalem and Peace Service consultancy office on the question of Palestine, London; Director, Ithaca Press, publishers of books on the Middle East. Uri Davis began his political career in the struggle against the confiscation of the lands of Deir el – Asad, Bi'na and Nahf in the Galilee and against the establishment of Karmiel as an exclusively Jewish city on these lands. In 1984 he was invited by the Chairman of the PLO and the President of the State of Palestine, Yasir Arafat, as the guest of the Palestine National Council (PNC), and he is since an observer – member at the PNC. His citizenship is Israeli and British, his nationality is Palestinian – Hebrew, his religion is Jewish. Uri Davis is a founding member of the RETURN group («Against the Israeli Law of Return – For the Palestinian Right to Return») and the RETURN Magazine Editorial Collective. ●

Algeria – Chance for Democracy?

In early June, President Shadli Benjedid, under pressure from the Islamic fundamentalist riots, accepted the resignation of the National Liberation Front (NLF) government. The new cabinet, appointed in its place, is the first non – NLF government since Algeria gained independence from French occupation in 1962. General elections scheduled for late June were postponed indefinitely, and a state of siege was declared.

by Lena Al Aswad

Two other factors were involved in President Benjedid's decision to change the government: Firstly, the previous government had failed to alleviate Algeria's economic crisis; secondly, Benjedid had prior plans to reduce the NLF's role in government. This was implicit in the new election laws, whereby all parties would compete on their own for parliamentary representation. It was further confirmed later in June, when Benjedid resigned from the NLF's chairmanship in order to serve as the president of all the people, rather than primarily the NLF's leader.

Increasing public discontent, due to the exacerbated economic crisis in the country, has caused broad popular protests in the past. Algeria has a foreign debt of $29 billion. Out of a population of 25 million – 75% of whom are younger than 30 – 1.5 million are unemployed (*Time,* June 17th).

In October 1988, thousands of young Algerians, angered by the deteriorating living conditions, demonstrated in the streets of the capital city. The demonstration was brutally suppressed by the police, and untold damage occurred. To deflect public discontent, the government shortly afterwards began relaxing control and embarked on political reforms, calling for political pluralism and the creation of a multi – party system. Since then, some 40 odd parties have been established. Among the first to be formed was the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF), which quickly gained a large constituency of fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists. In municipal and provincial elections in June 1989, the ISF won the majority of seats (55%).

In April of this year, the ISF's anger was aroused by the introduction of the new electoral laws. The ISF said that the new laws would limit its chance of becoming a strong bloc within the government because the president retained the right to appoint the government, without considering the political composition of the parliament. The ISF gained maximum benefits by agitating the Algerian masses against the NLF party, and called upon the public to demand an Islamic state and the resignation of Benjedid.

Fomenting chaos

On the first day of June, the ISF called for a general strike and organized demonstrations in the streets, condemning the new electoral laws and complaining that they were biased. Local councils, which are controlled by the fundamentalists, went on strike. On the second day of the demonstrations, the police used tear gas to suppress them; on the third day, watercannons were used to ▶

disperse the demonstrators. The police opened fire on the fourth day and soon afterwards, the government resigned. A state of siege was declared, and the military authorities were given powers almost equivalent to martial law.

The ISF did not call off its strike until a deal was reached with the authorities through the newly appointed prime minister, to postpone general elections and to hold presidential elections by the end of the year. An informal agreement was also reached to change the new electoral laws opposed by the ISF and the other parties.

In a sermon at Friday prayers in mid – May, Ali Belhaj, deputy chairman of the ISF, said that if the ISF gained a majority in the general elections, it would immediately suspend the constitution and enact *sharia* (Islamic law), ban all socialist and secular parties, and impeach Benjedid (*Al Safir,* May 13th). This theme has been echoed on many occasions by fundamentalist leaders. It demonstrates clearly how the fundamentalists would achieve democracy.

Despite their crushing victory in the local council elections two years ago, the fundamentalists have failed to provide desperately needed solutions for the many problems from which the country is suffering. ISF leader Madani said, «We won the municipal elections. Now people say we did nothing. That's true» (*Time,* June 27th). Although he blamed the government for the ISF's failure to provide jobs and housing, it is clear that even if the government had provided the means, the ISF is incapable of solving the complex political and socioeconomic difficulties of the country.

It was, therefore, logical for the ISF to avoid the scheduled June elections, by escalating violence and anarchy. Neither was it a surprise that the NLF government resorted to violence to confront the fundamentalists, declared a state of emergency and suspended elections. The authorities also face the same complex realities. Moreover, the deplorable events in October 1988, and the continuously deteriorating living conditions have stripped the ruling party of the mass support on which it was relying for winning the general elections.

Democracy is long overdue in Algeria. Yet it is apparent that the fundamentalists are not capable of achieving or sustaining true democracy. However, it is also true that the government had carefully tailored the new electoral laws to keep itself in power. The means used by the ISF to express opposition and pressure the government are extreme and condemnable. At the same time, the government's reaction was incorrect and unjustified. Repression and violence threaten the country's unity, cause material damage, generate more violence and plant the seeds of civil war.

The authorities, who are responsible for security and stability in the country, did not initially chart a course that took into account the fact that the ISF is the largest opposition party in the country. To avoid the disasterous confrontations, the NLF should have capitalized on its own access to the masses on the one hand, and on the major weakness of the ISF on the other: its two – year flop in the local councils. Sectors of the Algerian people are profoundly uneasy with the fundamentalists' attempts to impose a mini – Islamic state on the local level; and the broad masses have had none of their basic needs fulfilled. Embarking on a broader democratization, which involved the masses, might have given the NLF and the government much needed leverage in dealing with the fundamentalists' challenge. In this context, the ISF could have been allowed to present its programs in a public to present its programs in a public debate, to be judged by the people and the other opposition parties. If the ISF's intentions had been thus exposed, the government would have been in a strong position to call the fundamentalists to negotiations when the latter called their strike. This would have deflected the anger of the masses – the government and NLF's first line of defense – and further exposed the ISF's true aims.

An open dialogue on the political and socioeconomic problems of the country would have given the people at large the chance to evaluate the ISF's proposed solutions. But unfortunately, open dialogue has not been a tradition of the Algerian government. Thus, the ISF was not held publicly accountable for explaining its mistakes. With the ISF's challenge to the state reaching proportions tantamount to a coup, the authorities saw no alternative but to resort to outright repression.

Future prospects

The other opposition parties in the country were clever enough to realize what the ISF's intentions were. Although they shared the ISF's view concerning the electoral laws, they refrained from participating in the provocation of the street confrontations. Though for different reasons, the other opposition parties are also in agreement with the ISF's demand to hold presidential elections to coincide with the general elections, but they disagree that this should be achieved by force. The opposition has not given a convincing reason for the second demand, except to say that they want a comprehensive renovation of the whole system. If this is their aim, then holding the presidential election parallel to the general election is not enough, since real change does not come about only by replacing officials.

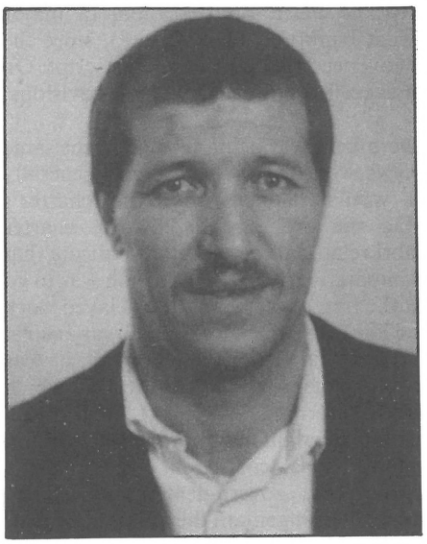
Political pluralism and obtaining power by means of elections are only the tip of the iceberg of democracy. The essence of democracy is social justice, i.e., equal distribution of the national wealth among the masses. The Islamic fundamentalists view democracy as a means of obtaining power. But once they achieve this, they would abort democracy, as one can deduce from the previously quoted Belhaj. The NLF and the authorities, on the other hand, supported democracy to the extent that it keeps them in power. The new election laws bear witness to this fact.

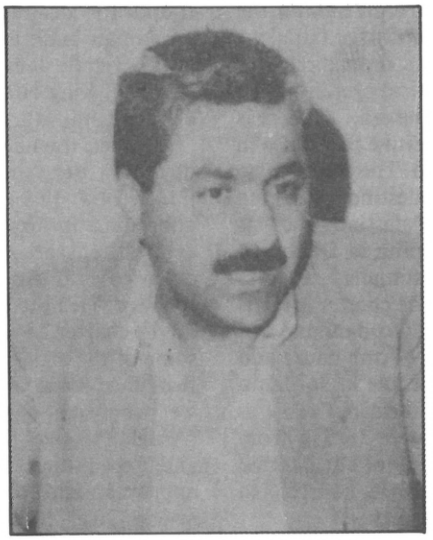
The fate of democracy in Algeria depends primarily on the role of the popular masses in the current struggle. It also depends on the ability of the democratic parties to close ranks with the masses, and step up efforts to safeguard national achievements and past progress, meanwhile developing solutions to Algeria's current problems. In this, the decisive question is how the NLF will push forward in the new situation. There are many indications that the NLF today is not a monolithic bloc, but encompasses a variety of forces and opinions concerning how to proceed.

Clearly, the role of the left, outside of the NLF, has been marginal in the past and present events in Algeria. The struggle in the country has polarized between two main blocs: the NLF and the ISF. So far, this form of confrontation appears to be leading the country to a real disaster. Two key questions remain: Will socialist forces, whether inside or apart from the NLF, be able to emerge as a bloc that can influence the course of current events? Will the NLF be able to rejuvenate its historically progressive role, orienting its internal policy towards the broad masses whom it originally led to independence? In both cases, the ability of these forces to contribute to a democratic resolution of Algeria's current crisis will depend on their being innovative in their thinking and remodeling their work in tune with new challenges on the local, regional and international levels. ●

Jordan, Democracy and Palestine

In June, a broad spectrum of the political forces in Jordan debated and adopted the new National Charter, followed by the formation of a new government. The significance of these events is evaluated by DP staffmember Farida Al Asmar, who was in Amman at the time, interviewing representatives of the three main parties of JANDA (Jordan's Arab Nationalist Democratic Alliance), the progressive coalition that acquired five posts in the new government.





The following persons were interviewed as background for this article, left to right:

– Lua'y Dabbagh, Politbureau member in charge of the Political Department of the Popular Democratic Unity Party in Jordan, established on the basis of the PFLP's organization in Jordan, and henceforth referred to as the Unity Party. Dabbagh was three times imprisoned for his political work/affiliation in the 1980s, pre – democracy stage.

– Tayseer Al Zabri, Secretary General of the Jordan People's Democratic Party (JPDP), established on the basis of the DFLP's membership in Jordan.

– Abdel Rahman Al Majali, member of the Jordanian Communist Party's (JCP) Central Committee and of the editorial board of *Al Jamahir,* the party's central organ.

On June 8th, Bush and Schwarzkopf were marching in the first victory parade held in the US since World War II. Perhaps they hoped to welcome back soldiers returning from the Gulf in a manner that would eclipse the devastation and unresolved conflicts left behind in the Middle East. But people in Jordan were not mesmerized by the US's military «splendor» or false peace promises. In a survey based on field interviews with 2,000 families chosen at random in Jordan's cities, villages and refugee camps, 80% pinned blame on the US and Israel for preventing a peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem. Almost 70% disputed the idea that a change had occurred in US, French and British policies towards the Palestinian question, while 78% considered the US – European peace moves as a political maneuver designed to confuse the Arabs and divert attention from the crimes committed against Iraq. An overwhelming 81.8% expressed disbelief in US willingness to pressure Israel into solving the conflict via implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. Also indicative of the national mood in Jordan was the answer to a more overall question: 29.4% of those polled said they would accept Israel's existence and ending the state of war only if Israel were to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, while 97.5% rejected such acceptance on principle *(The Star,* Amman, June 13 – 19th).

The National Charter

Lua'y Dabbagh of the Unity Party evaluated the charter adopted June 9th as follows: «First of all, it is a social charter, setting out basic directives for building a new society, as well as the framework for struggle between the classes. These directives derive from the consciousness of the respective classes, especially the bourgeoisie, as represented in the government and state. We view the charter as a historical compromise between the state and bourgeoisie on the one hand and the remaining classes and forces on the other. Jordan is today very developed compared with 40 years ago when the constitution was adopted by the parliament. It has developed in ▶

all fields, but the constitution was frozen all these years. The state institutions were not developed but used only as a tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie. For 30 years, we lived under martial law which the authorities used to suppress the political movement, especially the nationalists and the left. Then, in 1989, the April revolt in the South of Jordan erupted as a reaction to the decay of the economy. The bourgeoisie realized it could no longer rule as it had. Searching for an outlet to maintain its dominant role in the society, the bourgeoisie sought a new national charter. Realizing that the nationalist and popular movement was heading towards a larger social explosion, the ruling class took democracy as an instrument to ensure its own survival.»

Tayseer Al Zabri of the JPDP termed the charter «a denominator for many parties, ideas and political groups,» emphasizing the distinction between basic principles and specific articles of the charter. He added, «At the same time, we have our program in Jordan as one of the democratic parties.»

Abdel Rahman Al Majali of the JCP concurred with the evaluation of the others when he said: «Generally speaking, we view the charter as an important step in the right direction, especially since it confirmed democracy, political pluralism and civil liberties which are the main features of the era...» There is general consensus that the charter set out positive principles in the economic, social and cultural fields as well. The charter also defined the relations between Jordan and Palestine, affirming Jordan's recognition of the State of Palestine and its disengagement from the West Bank. According to Dabbagh, «The principle aspect is the right of the Palestinians to express their convictions and defend their identity. The charter affirms the historical, fraternal relations between Jordanians and Palestinians, considering Palestine as a pan – Arab cause and the struggle to liberate it as a duty for all people in Jordan.» Dabbagh also noted that the charter defines the army's role as non – political: «Its main function is to protect Jordan from Israel and to join the Arabs in liberating Palestine. The internal security forces should execute the law and not interfere in political life or violate the citizens' human dignity.»

Both he and Tayseer Al Zabri differentiated between the general principles of the charter and the need to formulate new laws, especially for elections, licensing political parties and publishing. Al Zabri reiterated the need «to make democracy a material reality, not merely words hanging in the air,» while Dabbagh stressed the imperative of a new labor law to guarantee the right of unionization, job security and social insurance for all workers. Some of these rights were partially provided for in the old law, but space was left for employers to implement them selectively, to their own interests. According to Dabbagh, «It is important to affirm that the right to work is sacred, especially now with so much unemployment. From the labor law, we can characterize the type of society we have. We are not so naive as to think we will get a great work law; this is still a bourgeois state, so there will be compromise. But the new draft is very good compared to the old law; it will give workers their rights, relatively speaking.»

Dabbagh predicted that the democratic forces stand on the threshold of a great political battle to have new laws adopted, abolish martial law and move quickly to normalize political life. «We think that martial law will be abolished, especially with the new government.»

Abolishing martial law

On June 3rd, six members of the Jordanian Communist Party – Revolutionary Path had been arrested when leaflets, purportedly slandering Prime Minister Badran, were found in their homes, although there was no evidence to support the security forces' claims that they had either written or distributed the leaflets. The democratic forces protested these arrests as a clear violation of freedom of expression, highlighting the imperative of cancelling martial law once and for all. In fact, there are continuing attempts to sabotage democracy from forces within the executive and security apparati, who wish to reassert their steadily eroding power. However, such violations appear more as a backlash, «splashes» which the democratic forces can combat on a case – to – case basis, rather than a concerted effort by the regime to kill democracy.

In the negotiations for entering the new government, JANDA obtained a pledge for the release of all political prisoners (30 had remained in Jordanian jails even after the democratic opening) and for the repeal of martial law. The latter proved more complicated than might appear since many fields were covered by this law. Those wanting to abolish it were confronted by the fact that another way would have to be found for dealing with the Petra Bank scandal (a major Jordanian bank that went bankrupt due to fraud), since the civil law code does not cover economic crimes. (Postscript: On July 7th, King Hussein cancelled most martial law provisions, effective July 8th.)

In fact, the new government was being formed in the same days that these interviews were conducted. It was generally understood that this would happen after the charter's adoption. In explaining the process whereby the charter evolved, Tayseer Al Zabri related some facts that indicate that a new government was imperative if democratization was to go forward. He noted that the past government had delayed work on the charter, saying : «The former prime minister was against some of the articles we put in the section on pluralism; he was fearful of some of the amendments to the constitution which we proposed, especially concerning articles 114 and 120.» (Article 114 gives the cabinet the right to monitor the allocation and expenditure of public funds, contingent on the king's approval, and to organize the government's storehouses; article 120 gives the cabinet, contingent on the king's approval, the prerogative of issuing regulations governing the kingdom's administration – the formation of government departments, appointing and dismissing government employees, supervising their work, determining their areas of competence, etc. The charter assigned these powers to the parliament which should pass new laws regulating the use of funds and organizing the country's administration.)

Al Zabri continued: «We also said that if martial law was needed in the future, it must be approved by the parliament and for a limited period. These things made him angry and he put the charter aside. It was not the Gulf crisis that delayed the charter. At that time, we were doing well. We asked the chairman of the charter committee, Mr. Ahmed Obeidat, to stop the discussion of the charter due to the situation, but he refused. Then when we finished our work at the end of 1990, Badran put it aside because he was angry about these points.»

New government

In mid – June, Prime Minister Badran resigned and King Hussein appointed Taher Masri to form a new government. On June 19th, the new, 25 – member cabinet was sworn in. Its composition is noteworthy in several respects. Most obvious is the absence of the Muslim Brotherhood which held five ministries in Badran's government; in the new cabinet, three ministries were assigned to more moderate representatives of the Islamic trend. On the other hand, five representatives of the progressive nationalist coalition, JANDA, were brought into the cabinet for the first time, heading the ministries of state,

Amman demonstration for cancellation of death sentences in Kuwait

labor, health, youth, and trade, industry and supply. Among the independents in the new cabinet, there are several other progressive nationalists, while the rest of the ministers are liberal in tendency, among them some notably pro – US personages. The changed composition of the cabinet was described as «tantamount to a coup d'etat in Jordanian contemporary politics» by some observers, while others noted: «The political elements in the Masri government are pro – establishment liberals with a heavy twist of pan – Arab and leftist trends, in comparison to the last Badran government which was pro – establishment with a noted presence of conservatives and Muslim fundamentalists» (*Jordan Times,* June 20 – 21st).

There are several reasons why Jordan's political establishment opted for this type of government at this stage. Taher Masri is the first Palestinian ever to serve as Jordan's prime minister and he has close relations with the PLO leadership. Many took his appointment as a sign that the regime is preparing the groundwork for a joint Jordanian – Palestinian delegation in order to enter negotiations with Israel.

Related to the internal scene, the new government's composition is a clear sign that the regime has reinforced its conviction that continuing the democratization process is key in developing the country. In his letter of designation to Masri, King Hussein listed national unity as the first of a number of principles on which Jordan's strength and progress must be based. This letter normally sets out priorities for the government; in it the king termed democracy «one of the most important pillars of national security» – a clear departure from the state's former reliance on the intelligence services to preserve the status quo.

The stress on modern development, democracy and unity explains why the Muslim Brotherhood was excluded from government in this round. While failing to launch any forward – thinking policies in the ministries they controlled, such as agriculture, the Brotherhood also fomented social division.

On June 12th, just before Badran's government resigned, 5,000 parents and educators presented him with a petition protesting the policies of Education Minister Akaileh of the Brotherhood, who had decreed that fathers could not attend certain of their daughters' activities at school, nor mothers visit their sons' schools. Other acts which the petitioners were protesting included: the dismissal of 14 ministry officials, attempts to ban certain books and coeducation, limiting the freedom of schools to close on Christian holidays and sabotage of Jordan's educational reform plan. The parents and educators raised the banner of the right to choose, which is more in line with the establishment's new bent towards development and social peace, via democracy, than are the Brotherhood's restrictive and reactionary ideas.

In his letter of designation to Masri, King Hussein also introduced two concepts which should give the progressive forces an official point of departure in connecting democratization to social justice. Among the government's top priorities he listed «correcting the internal and external imbalances in our economy» and «achieving a fair distribution of national income between all segments of society ...» Moreover, the king's stress on the Palestinian cause not only as a foreign policy issue, but among the principles for developing the society in Jordan, continued the trend of the National Charter to equalize between all citizens of the country, be they of Palestinian or Jordanian origin. This reflects the fact that the establishment in Jordan has finally come to terms, politically speaking, with the fact that the Palestinian community in Jordan represents a dynamic social and economic force which is needed for the country's future development. Thus, the PLO and all Palestinian revolutionaries are presented with the challenge of simultaneously participating in the democratization process and defending the Palestinian cause as that of a people with special interests due to their dispossession from their homeland.

On another level, the inclusion of JANDA in the new cabinet can also be viewed as a political challenge, or even a trap. In the current situation, the Jordanian regime needs the left and nationalist forces as a legitimizer of its policies and to evolve genuine national unity. Moreover, the chief concern in Jordan is the economic crisis, which virtually all admit to be irresolvable even if the government truly seeks a solution. On the one hand, the progressive forces have gained an unprecedented platform for addressing the people and influencing policy. On the other, if they fail to mount any constructive initiatives from their new posts, their mass following will suffer and they can easily be put aside in the future if the establishment finds their presence in government inconvenient. These apparently domestic issues also intersect with Jordan's relations to the rest of the world, where many of Jordan's old allies among Arab reaction and capitalist countries are surely not overjoyed by the new cabinet. However, the present situation, where Jordan is being treated with arrogant hostility by the US, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, mitigates for continued democratization, independent decision – making, social cohesion and close Palestinian – Jordanian relations.

Making democracy a material reality

On this background, it is interesting to note the progressive parties' answers about how they plan to work in the wake of the adoption of the National Charter.

Abdel Rahman Al Majali explained that the JCP embarked on a review of some of its ideological and organizational positions some time ago. «This process is closely connected with international developments and especially the changes that swept the socialist camp and the Soviet Union. Our review is also based on the democratic, political changes in Jordan and our preparations to transform the party from underground to public existence. These realities have nothing to do with the charter as such, which is a general framework for life in Jordan with its various trends; it does not intervene in political groups' ▶

drawing up their political framework and directions in accordance with the principles of political pluralism...»

In the JCP's view: «The most serious problem faced by people in Jordan is the overall deterioration of the economy, which affects the overwhelming majority of the population..(this) aggravated the problem of unemployment and pushed broad strata of the population under the poverty line. We regard these problems as a reflection of the parasitic mode of economy which still prevails. To alleviate the economic crisis, it is necessary to create substantial changes in the type of economy and adopt nationalist policies in all economic fields, including a review of the economic structure itself. Our approach, however, does not lessen the importance of following up on the people's everyday problems. This can be done through special and joint activity with other political forces, and through popular and professional bodies, particularly the trade unions.»

Concerning the relation between parliamentary and extraparliamentary work, Lua'y Dabbagh of the Unity Party said: «We are an opposition force. When we work on the political scene and in the parliament, we are representing the masses' demands, defending their rights and working to improve their opportunities on all levels. We also work directly among the masses to make them conscious of their rights and weight in the society. We work to build the instruments of social struggle – for women's, student and youth unions and local associations. Naturally, we express their work in our weekly magazine, *Nida Al Watan*. These types of work are in turn expressed in the political position of our deputy in the parliament. There is a dialectical connection between the two aspects.»

Unemployment was pinpointed by Tayseer Al Zabri as the main problem facing people in Jordan. About 200,000 people have returned to Jordan from the Gulf in 1991, adding to the unemployment rate which had already surpassed 30%. He added, «Palestinians in Jordan are facing a complex reality: They are poor, facing unemployment, suffering from martial law – problems shared by all in Jordan – and also they suffer from being refugees. These are the main problems, and the way to resolve them is democracy which we consider the prerequisite for everything.»

Concerning how to work now that the progressive coalition joined the government, Al Zabri said: «Now that we are participating in the parliament and the government, this puts greater responsibility on us than before. As progressive parties, we must do our best to resolve the essential matters in Jordan's political life. At the same time, we tell our collegues in the government that our programs must be given serious consideration. If we see that our programs cannot go forward, we'll come back and open a new kind of struggle against the government. The last government was lazy; it presented non – essential laws, but left out essential ones. Now the responsibility of the parliament is to press the government to give priority to formulating the new laws... We will enter this new stage. At the same time, we are not satisfied to participate in the cabinet and parliament only. These are fields for struggle... but we depend first of all on the masses of our people, their organizations, unions, etc., and the progressive parties and their unity. Secondly, we depend on the parliament and thirdly on the government.»

The mass movement

During the Gulf crisis, Jordan was the scene of intensive mass mobilization. Related to their reliance on the masses in pursuing democratization, the progressive forces need to have a clear evaluation of the mass movement in the post – war period.

Abdel Rahman Al Majali noted that the JCP does not find

«Al Rai» cartoon lampoons Kuwait's abuses

it constructive to assess the initial reaction of the mass movement because «the scope of the destruction inflicted on Iraq by the aggressive imperialist coalition caused shock and a mechanical reaction. But after exposure of the objectives of this aggression, the masses in general and the political forces in particular began a process of reconsidering and rearranging their priorities in order to confront the imperialist – Zionist plan. Immediately after the war, the imperialists and Zionists sought to capitalize on the new situation in the region in order to promote their control over the oil and the region, and to liquidate the Palestinian cause. Our masses became even more conscious of these plans and this issue will be a major pillar of the mass movement in the future.»

Tayseer Al Zabri conceded that one cannot compare the mass mobilization during the crisis with the present situation, «Our people were astonished by what happened. They anticipated a long battle, but no battle occurred and they are suffering as a result. As the [Iraqi] troops were withdrawing from Kuwait, people here were in the streets shouting that we are winning the battle, not knowing the battle had already ended, because we did not trust the Western media when it reported the results of the war. It was horrible...Now the people have stopped some of their activities because they are watching what the Iraqi government has done – accepting resolution 687 and the troops in the North. But I think the people are still ready to struggle against imperialism and Zionism. They are now watching for the time when they will get their strength in battle, but what can they do when there is no battle?

«While our people were looking to the Iraqi leadership to face the battle, in Jordan we are seeking democracy, pluralism and the cancellation of martial law, connecting these national demands to our position towards Iraq and the Gulf crisis, and focusing on the intifada to the same degree. We said that Jerusalem – Amman – Baghdad is our line of battle. Now one line of the battle has stopped, but Amman still requires our forces, and the intifada still needs Palestinian – Arab joint struggle against Israel.»

Lua'y Dabbagh of the Unity Party evaluated the aftermath of the Gulf war as follows: «We have to accept the reality that the level of activity and great enthusiasm has declined, because the masses feel more defeated than do the political parties and movements. During the war, there were many committees of many types and their main interest was to support Iraq and mobilize the people to defend Jordan in case of war. Such committees dissolved by themselves. We have the duty to revive the mass movement by a major initiative – a political, economic initiative, using the social struggle as an instrument to mobilize the people to struggle for their own interests in the face of the acute economic crisis. We are working on how to defend the political and civil rights of women in particular, as well as of other social sectors. The masses are ready to be involved when the political parties and movement are mature and have a response to the issues that concern them.

«Mounting a major initiative depends on how the political parties view the new era. The main thing is to protect democracy, to pressure the bourgeoisie and government to resolve the economic crisis, taking into account the interests of the popular classes. The initiative of the political parties and popular forces must revive mass mobilization in order to protect democracy, support Iraq's reconstruction, defend its territorial integrity and resolve the Kurdish question in the framework of an internal solution based on democracy and self – determination of the Kurdish people, but protecting Iraq's integrity. We are now working on part of this initiative, concentrating on defending the right of Palestinians and Jordanians in Kuwait. This is a prelude to raising other questions.»

At the time of this interview, protests were at a height against the death sentences handed down by martial courts in Kuwait against 29 Iraqis, Jordanians, Palestinians and other Arabs for such «crimes» as writing or making lay – out for a pro – Iraqi newspaper. This made front – page headlines as the Jordanian government called for international intervention to reverse the death sentences. PNC members directed an open letter to Kuwaiti officials demanding that these arbitrary and excessive sentences be rescinded and torture ended. On June 19th, 150 relatives of the condemned staged a sit – in at the Red Cross building in Amman, accompanied by representatives of popular committees and unions, as well as three MPs. They then headed toward the Kuwaiti embassy, intending to present a petition demanding fair trials, reversal of the death sentences and an end to acts of revenge and torture. Kuwaiti officials tried to keep the people off the embassy grounds and refused to receive the petition, leading MP Mansour Murad of JANDA to call for Jordan to severe ties with Kuwait if the latter did not respond to the appeals.

In late June, Kuwait commuted all 29 death sentences to life imprisonment in response to the appeal of the UN Secretary – General and other international organizations. However, no other steps have been taken that would indicate fair treatment for all. On the contrary, discrimination against non – Kuwaiti Arabs has accelerated, leading to a mass exodus of as many as 5,000 people from Kuwait in two weeks. In Amman on July 4th, 2,000 protested the mistreatment of Palestinians and Jordanians in Kuwait, along with the Lebanese Army's shelling of Palestinian camps near Sidon, in the biggest demonstration in Jordan since the end of the Gulf war.

The Islamic forces

Until the new democratic era, the Muslim Brotherhood was the only organized force allowed to work openly in Jordan. With the 1989 elections, the Islamic forces gained roughly one – third of the seats in the parliament, constituting the single biggest bloc. They were subsequently prominent in the mass mobilization against the imperialist attack on Iraq and, in January, Prime Minister Badran brought the Brotherhood into his cabinet. In answer to a question as to whether the Islamic forces have gained or lost influence as a result of the outcome of the Gulf war and their own participation in government, Lua'y Dabbagh said: «It is clear that the Islamic forces are becoming weaker, but that does not mean that the left or other nationalist forces are stronger. In the aftermath of the war, mass participation and enthusiasm are less, as I explained, because the masses feel the defeat. To some extent they hold the political forces responsible for this. Since the Islamic forces are the biggest group among these forces, they suffer the impact [of this blame] more than others. Also their participation in government negatively influenced their mass support, because they diverted the struggle from facing the big problems our society has. They worked to reinforce their presence in the ministries they controlled and to limit the role of women. In addition to their policies in the field of education, they segregated employees in the Ministry of Social Development. In a ministry that really depends on women – over 60% of the employees are women – this obviously had a negative impact.»

Tayseer Al Zabri insisted that the relative decline in the Islamic forces' popularity was almost solely connected to their record in government: «The people saw that they gave nothing. In the social field, they confronted the women's union. In the field of education, they elicited the opposition of hundreds of ▶

thousands of people. In agriculture, they initiated nothing except letting the sheep go to the forests to graze!»

The Muslim Brotherhood was not negatively affected by the results of the Gulf crisis in Al Zabri's view, but he added another element to his evaluation: «This question is not restricted to Jordan. People here see what the Islamic forces are doing all over the Arab world. What did they do recently in Tunis? In Algeria? When the country was heading towards democracy and elections, they took to the streets, creating a crisis and confronting the government, seeking to oust it. Many people here are fearful of what might happen if they were to depend on the Muslim Brotherhood. Perhaps also the clashes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip [between Hamas and PLO groups] have had an effect; people see that these things are not to the benefit of the intifada...However, the Brotherhood is still a strong party here, having spread their forces in many areas. We need time, work and programs so people can compare us with them. Now, with ministers in the new government, we are in the spotlight. The people are watching us and comparing our performance with the past.»

The conflict between the Muslim Brotherhood and the progressive forces appears most intense on the social level, particularly concerning education and women's role in society, but Lua'y Dabbagh explained that it exists as a political conflict as well: «We don't think all the Islamic forces believe in democracy. Some Islamic officials have said that all non – believers and leftists should be out of the society. Though we join forces politically, especially for Palestine and supporting Iraq, this does not mean we are in overall harmony in the political field. I expect a confrontation to occur in the coming session of the parliament when we discus the new laws; then the divergence of ideology will become apparent...» Dabbagh explained that it can at times be difficult to distinguish whether disagreement with the Islamic forces is social or political, because they themselves do not make this distinction: «They go on the offensive on the social level to arrive at political results. The social tension they have generated concerning the status of women and Christians in the society could have dangerous political consequences. This society has its defects, so such tension could be disasterous, in the worst case leading towards sectarian conflict.»

In discussing the Islamic forces, Dabbagh found it important to distinguish between the religion itself and those who believe in it and may instinctively be anti – imperialist and anti – colonialist on the one hand, and the «political religion» on the other. The political religion, as seen with the Muslim Brotherhood, has traditionally had the role of compromise – in Egypt, Jordan, etc.: «They found a way to coexist with the government even if the latter was pro – imperialist. In Jordan, they did not constitute an opposition or even have a policy against corruption. Their political role was limited until the 1989 elections, when they rushed on the scene. For the first time in their history, the Brotherhood confronted the government in Jordan, hoping to get votes, and they did.»

Concerning the strength of the Islamic forces, Dabbagh pointed to two factors. The first is that religious ideology is widespread among the masses, especially the less educated. Secondly, the Muslim Brotherhood depends on bourgeois strata, especially big and small merchants. «This sector is very conservative and in a society like Jordan, we don't expect its role to decrease. However, the war and its consequences and the new era in the world have weakened their ideology.» Politically, the Unity Party seeks ways to cooperate with the Islamic forces. «It is not in our interests to make an open struggle with them,» stated Dabbagh, adding, «but we have to confront them politically and in terms of their social policy, because the conflict this generates will have negative consequences on democracy. Now, with the new government, if the popular movement, the liberals and the bourgeoisie arrive at any solution to the main social problems, this will be a shock for the Muslim Brotherhood. If no solutions are found, JANDA will take the blow as did the Brotherhood when the upper bourgeoisie excluded them from this government.»

Pluralism and party proliferation

With the adoption of the National Charter, over 60 parties applied to be licensed. I asked Lua'y Dabbagh if there was political justification for such proliferation or if many of these parties were based on personalities rather than clearly defined programs. He discounted the role of individuals and rather listed five reasons for this blossoming of pluralism: «One: This is our first democratic experience in Jordan; the emergence of so many parties is not strange, but a natural expression for a highly politicized and educated society that has lived under oppression. Two: Over the years, all pan – Arab and leftist parties have operated in Jordan, especially the Palestinian movement; the constellation is quite varied, so it is natural to see many parties now that they are allowed. Third: It is obvious that when we have always had a one – party system, the party of the government and intelligence services, defending the interests of a single class, the reaction will be a proliferation of parties; even the bourgeoisie is a diversified class; so now parties are blooming, representing all classes and strata. Four: The history of many of these parties is connected with the Arab national movement and its branches in different countries. In Jordan, this has expressed itself in diversity. Let's take the Baath Party as an example. There are two sections, pro – Iraq and pro – Syria, but even within these branches you find anti – regime groups that do not join the other branch; thus, there are 6 – 7 projected Baath Parties now in Jordan.

«Five and in conclusion: We strongly believe in the basic right of persons in Jordan to create parties as permitted by the constitution. We must protect this right and not be afraid of the proliferation of parties now, but we are not so superficial as to think that in a society of 4 million, more than 60 parties can survive. The political and social struggle will provide a natural selector. The 60 parties will eventually be reduced to the few which have the required dynamics and modes of struggle, and a program which corresponds to the major issues of concern to the main classes and strata.»

All three of the parties interviewed expressed satisfaction with the state of cooperation within JANDA, which also includes other leftist and nationalist groups, and individuals connected to Fatah. The need for improving joint work stems both from JANDA's new posts in the cabinet and the future objective of forming a progressive national front in Jordan. The Unity Party stresses that this front must rest on the unity of the left, which will become increasingly pressing as the situation evolves. Lua'y Dabbagh noted that such unity is not only an objective necessity but also quite possible if dialogue is intensified among the leftist parties: «The diversities among the left parties are subjective. In our analysis and ways of facing problems, we are very close. In some cases, the diversities between parties are the same as diversities in each party internally...Left unity is a task in our program.»

Jordan and Palestine

In June, King Hussein made headlines when he told the French magazine *Le Point* that now is the time for face – to – face talks with Israel. When asked about the significance of this statement, Tayseer Al Zabri pointed out that the royal court had denied this statement, saying the

monarch was referring to the international conference where all parties would meet. Aside from this, he based his assessment of Jordan's policy vis – a – vis the peace process on more overall factors, including the PLO's position: «I don't think Jordan will go it alone, repeating the example of Sadat, but I do think the government is willing to make a joint Palestinian – Jordanian delegation...I cannot emphasize that the PLO will refuse because I think that many in the PLO leadership want this.» He explained that as a Jordanian party, the JPDP views this as a matter for the PLO to decide: «We don't intervene, but it is difficult to explain the PLO leadership's position. Here, in secret discussions with the government, the PLO said they are willing to make a joint delegation. In Damascus, they said they wanted an Arab delegation. In Tunis and at the Central Council session, they said they want a solely PLO delegation. We have heard many different things and this makes people doubt...However, I don't think that Arafat and his collegues will give the final word on this matter without the participation of other parties, especially the PFLP and DFLP. Such a matter requires agreement between the three essential sections of the PLO.»

Commenting on King Hussein's statement, Abdel Rahman Al Majali said, «We do not welcome any statement which could weaken the demand for an international peace conference, as this detracts from creating a united Arab position and coordination between the PLO and Jordanian government. He noted that at present the JCP is not so concerned with the forms of the peace process, but insists on affirming the principles which would guarantee solving the Palestinian cause on the basis of the relevant UN resolutions and restoring the Palestinian people's rights, including the establishment of their independent state. It is thus most concerned with maintaining the soleness of the PLO's representation: «We oppose any impairment of the PLO's independent role in solving the Palestinian cause,» he concluded.

Lua'y Dabbagh prefaced his remarks by reminding that the Jordanian government has always been ready to open dialogue on the basis of resolutions 242 and 338. However, there are changes in the regional situation as well as in Jordan's own role. Since the 1988 decision to disengage from the West Bank, the Jordanian role in the peace process is secondary, and it will not negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, especially if the PLO does not want this. Dabbagh suggested that the king's statements were intended to introduce a new element in the context of the stalemate of the peace process: «There is a move to resolve the problem of the Palestinians' representation in the proposed regional conference. We in the Unity Party are against Jordan participating in such a conference because it is a substitute for an international conference, and aims to focus on bilateral settlements and avoid the Palestinian problem which is central. No major player in the region says it opposes dialogue with Israel, but the question is how. We strongly support the PLO's position for an international conference with the participation of all parties, and the PLO representing the Palestinians.»

Concerning the prospects for a joint Palestinian – Jordanian delegation, Dabbagh noted that the Unity Party is not optimistic about the peace process advancing now due to the Israeli demands. «However, if there really is a peace process, the new Jordanian government has the cards it needs to play in order to ward off US pressure and seek an agreement with the PLO; perhaps then, there would be a joint delegation, but this is not the case now. Some are saying that this is the ideal government to approach the peace process as the US wants, but I don't think it will be as the US wants. We think that there are red lines that Prime Minister Masri cannot cross. The nature of the forces that support the new government puts some kind of conditions as to what kind of peace it must seek. If the PLO wants a solution to the problem of Palestinian representation, there is the possibility of a joint delegation. As a Jordanian party, we support the Palestinians' rights to independence, creating their state, self – determination and return. In principle we oppose a joint delegation, but we don't oppose the PLO's choice. However, as a Jordanian nationalist party, we seek the liberation of Palestine, notwithstanding the unity [of Palestinians and Jordanians] created in Jordan. No Jordanian can think differently.»

The intifada is the frontline

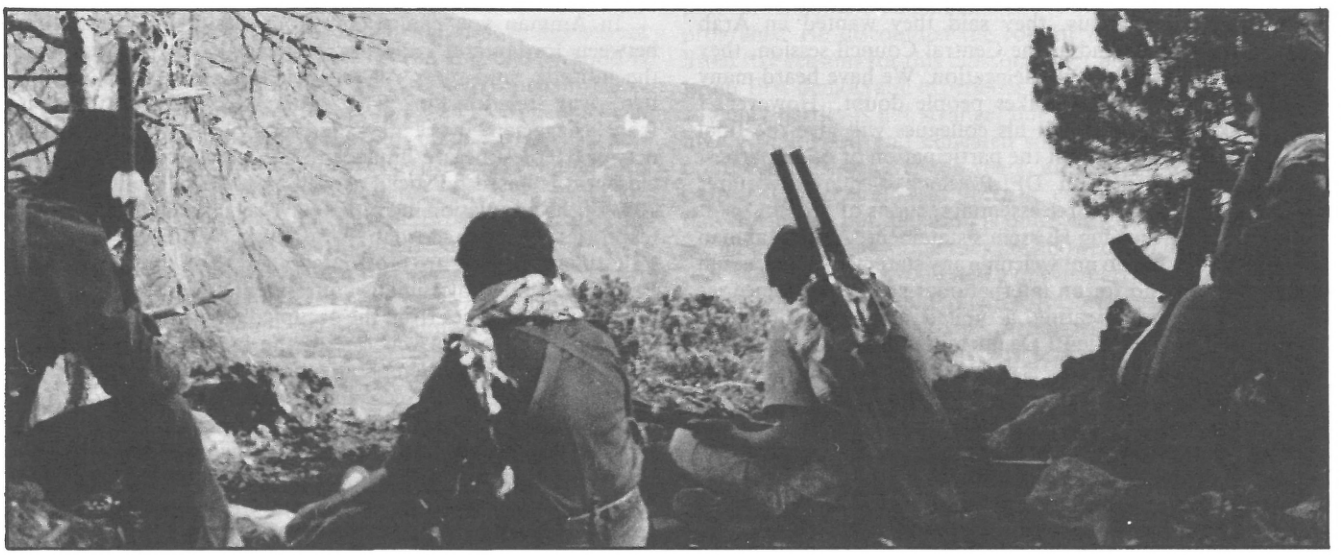
In Amman you can ask anybody about the connection between Jordan and Palestine, between democratization and the intifada, and they will tell you there is a direct, daily, two – way relationship. The progress of the intifada is front – page news in the press, and reactions to major events in occupied Palestine are immediate and often emotional. This closeness is based on social as well as political realities. Over 70% of the population in Jordan have relatives in the occupied territories. Though Jordan is surely the country in which Palestinians in exile are most integrated, their roots remain in Palestine. Many Palestinians not resident in Jordan come here to meet their families from the occupied territories.

While the intifada was one of the factors motivating the new policy in Jordan, democratization east of the Jordan River also fuels the intifada. According to Lua'y Dabbagh, «If there is a revolution in Jordan, a new kind of democracy, this will support the intifada more than anything, providing it with endurance that will rule out any unjust solution. When the Jordanian people have the right to participate in decision – making, the Palestinians are protected, because the people support the Palestinian cause; even if the government changes, this popular support will remain. The popular movement here is deeply affected by the performance of the intifada in facing up to Israel. The movement in Jordan has always had the Palestinian cause as a top priority. In the last three years, the intifada has taken top priority on the agenda of the parties and mass organizations. Mobilizing material support to the intifada and spreading its message all over Jordan has been a main duty of the Unity Party on a daily basis – our main task after defending democracy.»

Something like the majority of families in the West Bank depend on their families in Jordan for economic support, and this has surely increased with the exodus of Palestinians from the Gulf oil states. Sectors of the West Bank economy depend on the Jordanian market and vice versa. This interdependence was devastatingly apparent in 1988, when the Jordanian dinar collapsed, inflicting added economic hardship on the population of the occupied territories. However, Tayseer Al Zabri, who is a member of the Committee to Support the Intifada, noted that even with the economic crisis, people in Jordan are giving more now to the intifada than before under martial law and its restrictions. He also noted the intertwining of the political processes affecting Jordan and Palestine: «We put the intifada as an essential matter for our movement in the wake of the Gulf crisis, along with the defense of democracy in Jordan, because both are effective tools against the US and Israeli plans to dominate the region.»

One comes away with the impression that the intifada is not at all an external matter for people in Jordan, but rather a part of their lives. Abdel Rahman Al Majali spoke for many when he said: «The intifada is the frontline for defending Jordan, while Jordan and its people, Jordanian and Palestinian, are the intifada's strategic depth.» ●

Palestinian Resistance Jeopardized



On July 1st, the Lebanese Army deployed in Sidon and began its offensive against Palestinian freedom fighters in the area. The Palestinians' position was that they would not impede the deployment; nor would they withdraw or surrender their arms. However, the Palestinian resistance was drawn into a battle it had not wanted. Four days of fighting left about 50 persons dead and 170 injured. The bulk of the casualties were Palestinians; the majority of the dead were freedom fighters, while among the injured, a large number were civilians hit by the Lebanese Army's tank – mounted cannons. Over 300 Palestinians were arrested in the Sidon area and many are still detained.

The fighting was stopped with an agreement whereby Palestinian freedom fighters withdrew into the two camps in the area (Ain Al Hilweh and Mieh Mieh), retaining their light weapons, but relinguishing medium and heavy weapons to be transported out of Lebanon. Meanwhile, the Lebanese government pledged to negotiate the civil and social rights of the Palestinian community in Lebanon.

It is noteworthy that the Palestinian resistance's positions outside the camps were in the hills east of Sidon – precisely on the frontlines with Israel's proxy, the SLA, in Kfar Falous. All through the eighties, this was a main point of confrontation between the joint Lebanese – Palestinian resistance and the Lebanese fascists. Behind Kfar Falous lies Jezzine, the main SLA – Israeli outpost in South Lebanon, controlling passage between the Bekaa Valley and the Israeli – occupied «security zone».

Soon after the clashes ended in the Sidon area, the Lebanese Army repeated its operation in Tyre, surrounding the three Palestinian refugee camps there (Rashidiyeh, Burj Al Shemali and Al Buss). Though heavy and medium weapons have been handed over, the Lebanese Army maintains its siege on these camps. Palestinians are checked and sometimes harassed upon entry and exit, reminding of the sixties, when Palestinians in Lebanon lived under the constant surveillance of the intelligence service, and more recent times when Amal militiamen blockaded the camps in the wake of Israeli withdrawal.

Talks have begun between two Lebanese ministers and the PLO/Palestinian resistance organizations, but as yet no definite guarantees have been extended to the 500,000 Palestinians in Lebanon, who over the years have been subject to attack not only from Israel, but from the Lebanese right as well. Their civil and social rights have yet to be defined, while any talk of political rights – which encompasses their right to fight to return to their homeland – has been ruled out by Lebanese Defense Minister Murr, who glorified the Lebanese Army's operation in Sidon.

And now Jezzine?

The Lebanese government presented the army deployment in Sidon and Tyre as the prelude to its march on Jezzine. As the siege began on the camps near Tyre, Lebanese Transport Minister Fakhouri stated: «The army's move into Jezzine is expected to be accomplished within weeks rather than months» (Associated Press, July 9th).

However, as of this writing a month later, the Lebanese Army – which mustered 11,000 troops to confront Palestinian freedom fighters – has not

ventured in the direction of Jezzine. The government was obviously banking on US intervention to ease army deployment in Jezzine and avoid confrontation with the Israeli and SLA forces, but was it so naive to think such US accomodation was forthcoming? In any case, Israel has categorically refused to withdraw either from Jezzine or the occupied security zone. More likely than Israeli withdrawal is a future attempt by the US to have the Lebanese government, at Israel's behest, enact the resettlement of Palestinians in Lebanon, which is tantamount to forcing them to relinguish their right to return to Palestine. This could be part of the many behind – the – scenes deals being discussed in conjunction with the proposed regional conference.

The struggle for South Lebanon is, however, far from over, as seen in the almost daily attacks on the Israeli occupiers and SLA by Lebanese resistance fighters. In this escalation of resistance operations, four Israeli soldiers were killed in the first half of July, while the SLA has suffered even heavier casualties. Israeli – SLA shelling and bombing of southern villages continues unabated, while on July 24th, the Israeli air force struck as far north as Damour, only nine miles from Beirut. It is hard to see that sovereignty with any real meaning has been established by the Lebanese Army deployment. ●

In whose interests is it that Palestinian blood be shed?

The following was translated by Amr Dasouqi from *Al Makatel Al Thawri (The Revolutionary Fighter),* the magazine of the PFLP's military department, issue no. 102, July 1991.

Despite the flexibility demonstrated by the Palestinian leadership vis – a – vis the Taif agreement and the deployment of the Lebanese Army, this army opened fire on the Palestinians in South Lebanon. The Lebanese authorities insisted on postponing an official dialogue with the Palestinian leadership and instead launched a campaign of searches, raids and arrests against Palestinians in a number of areas. But most surprising were the statements of the Lebanese Army commanders and a number of ministers lauding the great victory scored against the Palestinians. These statements reached a degree that would make one think that the victory had been scored against the Zionist enemy and its agents, who have seized extensive areas of South Lebanon.

It is noteworthy that these areas of South Lebanon are, from a Zionist perspective, regarded as part and parcel of «Greater Israel.» This view has been reiterated by the Zionist leaders who repeatedly announce that Israel will not withdraw from South Lebanon, even if the Palestinian military presence is totally eliminated.

Why then did the Lebanese authorities create these clashes? In whose interests are these «victories» they are talking about? In whose interests is the campaign of searches, raids and arrests launched by the Lebanese authorities, despite their knowledge of how flexible and responsive the Palestinians have been in relation to the Taif agreement and the deployment of the Lebanese Army throughout all Lebanon? Why did the Lebanese authorities insist on fighting instead of talking?

There is no doubt that the Lebanese authorities were banking on the illusive promises of the US, and thus working to meet the Israeli conditions which stipulate liquidation of the Palestinian revolution, the Lebanese National Resistance Front and the Islamic nationalist forces, in order to guarantee Israel's northern borders. In return, the Lebanese authorities vainly hope that UN resolution 425, stipulating Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, will be implemented. It seems that the authorities have totally forgotten about the Zionists' dreams of controlling the water resources of South Lebanon, chiefly the Litani River, and their relentless efforts to bind Lebanon with economic and security treaties. Until Israel achieves these goals, it will continue blackmailing the Lebanese authorities by demanding withdrawal of the Syrian troops from Lebanon. Moreover, Israel will continue its efforts to abrogate the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Syria and Lebanon, and to sever Lebanon's ties with the Arab world under false security pretexts.

Together with their Lebanese brothers, the Palestinians have offered great sacrifices to defend Lebanon against the Zionists' greedy ambitions and to liberate the occupied parts of Lebanon. The Palestinians remain willing to participate in this struggle of defense and liberation. More importantly, the Palestinians have learned from their own experience that the Palestinian camps and masses and the Lebanese land and people can only be protected by the joint Palestinian – Lebanese resistance, which should continue as long as Israel continues to occupy Lebanese territory. In addition, it has become very clear that, in principle, the Palestinians in Lebanon have the same rights and duties as the Lebanese people, and that they should enjoy these rights after having been deprived of them for so long.

Hence, it is necessary to continue dialogue between the Lebanese government and the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people wherever they are. This dialogue should resolve all unsettled issues and address the points of disagreement in order to resolve them in a democratic manner – removed from threats and fighting. In our view, all fighting should be directed against the Zionist enemy.

When the UN Security Council passed resolution 425 in 1978, there was no mention of the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon. Therefore, all Lebanese and Arab endeavors should be channeled into forcing Israel to comply with that resolution unconditionally. Instead of pressuring the nationalist resistance, pressure should be exerted on the US, the self – proclaimed «guardian of human rights» and «defender» of UN resolutions, because the US along with its stepchild, Israel, is the party hampering implementation of this UN resolution, as well as those pertaining to the Palestinian question. The Palestinians, on the contrary, have been struggling to enact these resolutions.

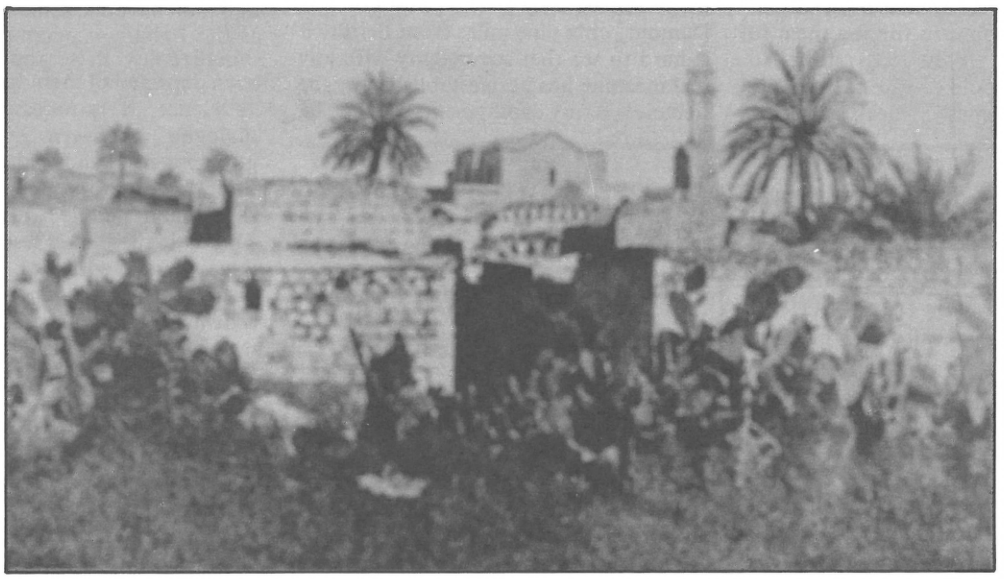
The Lebanese authorities should also know that the sole beneficiary of the destruction of the Palestinian and Lebanese national resistance is the Zionist enemy and, of course, the US administration.

Finally, dialogue between the Lebanese government and the PLO is a very urgent matter; it is also incumbent on the Lebanese nationalist forces and personages to reject the army's transgressions against the Palestinian camps. These matters are no less important than the collective task of confronting the Zionist enemy to force it to relinguish the parts of Lebanon it has occupied. We should all move now before it is too late – before we all fall victim to the Zionist state's ambitions.●

Palestinian Literature 1900 – 48

Part III

This is the third – and last – of a series of articles on pre – *nakbah* Palestinian literature. The previous article dealt with the period 1920 – 39. This one deals with the period 1939 – 48, the saddest chapter in the history of the Holy Land.



Lydda, pre – 1948 Palestine

by Mohamed Idris

During World War II the sympathies of Arabs lay with the Axis powers, for no other reason than that the opposing powers, the Allies, had fragmented and occupied the Arab World, thus betraying the promises they had made to the Arabs during World War I, when these were strongly pro – Allied. The rift between the Arabs and the Allies was deepened by the latter's strong support for Zionism.

Meanwhile, Zionism itself was deepening and making utmost use of that rift, «convincing» the Allies that the Arabs were untrustworthy and hostile to strategic Allied interests. Worse, the Arabs were made to appear as pro – Hitler and, therefore, pro – Nazi; and Arab opposition to Zionism was interpreted as an Eastern version of anti – Semitism. Likewise, in an effort to actualize its master dream, the seizure of Palestine, Zionism exploited and even contributed to Nazi persecution of Jews.

The course of events during World War II was extremely favorable to the Zionists, who succeeded in channelling the world's understandable sympathy with the Jews into their vicious, already powerful campaign for the seizure of Palestine – a calculated effort to exploit a *human* tragedy for the achievement of unjust *political* objectives. To this end, Zionism took part in further persecuting Displaced Persons, as were called the Jewish survivors of Nazi persecution, and pressuring them into leaving their countries and immigrating to Palestine. Whereas the British government had already curbed the influx of Jewish immigration, other Allied governments, especially that of the USA, gave full support to the Zionist project. It became obvious that the West was determined to solve the «Jewish question» at the expense of the Arabs, who became scapegoats for a sin they hadn't committed.

The weakness of the Arab world (the regional sponsor of the cause of Palestine) under Allied military occupation, stood in sharp contrast to the strength of Zionism and its sponsors, especially the USA. It was then that the Zionists, with full Allied support, achieved absolute military superiority over the Arabs of Palestine, who, in contrast, were denied minimum military organization and equipment. Whereas the British Mandate authorities in Palestine turned a blind eye to the smuggling of huge quantities of arms and other military equipment to the Zionist paramilitary organizations, the mere possession by an Arab of an antique rifle was outlawed and the owner severely punished.

Against this grim background, Palestine seemed to be standing on the verge of a fatal disaster, and Palestinians were overwhelmed by a mixed feeling of bitterness appre – hensiveness, helplessness and, worst of all, desperation.

1939 – 48: The Poetry

That sense of despair was now and then interrupted by reports of German military success, and these occasional outbursts of hope were reflected in the writings of this period. In the preface to his volume of poetry entitled *Fire Mountain,*

Borhaneddin Al Abbooshi writes, «I hate aggression regardless of who commits it against who... I composed these poems when Hitler invaded Poland and then France, which made me hope that France would thereby be forced to withdraw its troops from Syria and Lebanon, and that Britain, too, might have to quit the Arab countries under its rule. We are *not* with Hitler, but at the same time, we are definitely against the British and French occupation of our countries. What we want is to be independent and free from all occupation.»

When the British solicited the support of the Arabs, Al Abbooshi wrote a poem entitled «We Will Not Be Bitten Twice by the Same Snake,» which is a reference to Britain's betrayal of the Arabs in the aftermath of World War I. Addressing the British, he says:

Having murdered our peace
And brought us terror and death,
You now want to make friends with us!

There is blood on the hand you extend to us,
As there is blood on the soil whose love you seek!
You have sold us wholesale to Zion,
And now you come to buy our friendship!

Bitterness was coupled with absolute distrust of the intentions of the colonial powers. Thus, when General Spears headed for Damascus to «save» it from the French, Al Abbooshi wrote «History Repeats Itself,» a poem in which he suspects the British general of being «another Lawrence in disguise.» This is a reference to Lawrence of Arabia, who early in this century came to Arabia, and lived with the Arabs for many years as a dear friend. When he returned to Britain, it was disclosed that the «dear friend» had been a spy for the British administration. In a sarcastic vein, the poem addresses General Spears thus: «How many pillars do *you* intend to make?» (Pillars is a reference to *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom,* the book which Lawrence wrote upon his return from the Arab world.) In his notes to the poem, the poet makes the shrewd remark: «When the British administration made that plot [Lawrence's espionage mission in Arabia], it perhaps miscalculated the consequences. Whatever immediate benefits it may have gained therefrom, such benefits are nothing compared with the damage it has caused European, especially British, long – term interests in the region. Having alienated *nations* from one another, colonialism, blinded by aggressiveness and narrow self – interest, is now intent on making nations distrust *individuals* of other nations.»

Another outstanding poet of this period is Hassan Al Bohairi, whose poems are different laments of one and the same event – the steady drowning of the homeland. He published three volumes of poetry, all of which are deeply stamped with grief and apprehension. Typical of his poems is «Haifa Dwells in our Eyes,» which depicts the sublimity and natural beauty of his home city – its groves and shore, its mountains and woods. In a sad tone he then adds:

So great is our love for you
That if we are separated from you
We shall certainly cease to be
Though we may continue to breathe.

In this and other poems, Al Bohairi stresses his belief that one's homeland is not just the place of one's birth and residence, but an integral component of one's consciousness and relationship with life. Nor is it merely a political entity, but a psychological, cultural and spiritual reality of utmost significance to all those belonging to it, both as individuals and as a community.

In «A Voice from Palestine,» the poet's sadness gives way to a more positive sentiment:

But tears, however abundant,
And sighs, though deep,
Cannot save our Palestine.

The enemy is making it impossible.
For us to live in it or live for it;
Therefore let us die for it.

With Fadwa Tukan, who is mainly a post – *nakbah* poetess, we have the most mournful voice in Palestinian poetry. In less than eight years she had to lament both the sudden, untimely death of her dearest brother, Ibrahim, and the loss of her homeland. To her, Ibrahim had been not only a loving brother, but an intimate friend and devoted teacher. His death stamped her mind and her poetry with a distinctive melancholic touch. The titles of her volumes of poetry indicate this tenor: *The Spring of Pain, Alone with Days,* etc. Of this major aspect of her poetry she says, «With his death, fate dealt my heart a blow that triggered an inexhaustible spring of pain whence all my songs flow.»

In an apostrophe to Ibrahim's soul entitled «Dream of the Memory,» she asks if he knows what has befallen the homeland; if he can see members of the bodies of his people «scattered across roads... their eyes gouged out and thrown into the mud.» In this and, indeed, in the majority of her later poems, her grief for a *personal* loss, the death of her brother, is inextricably fused with her grief for a *national* disaster, the *nakbah.*

Abdul Karim Al Karmi is rightly called the Poet of the *Nakbah.* Except for a handful of songs, his poetry depicts the crying injustice suffered by Palestinians in the period 1947 – 48: the death, the horror and the misery. Addressing a fellow homeless refugee, he says:

Together, brother, we go;
Therefore carry your wound
And walk by my side.

Then, predicting the ultimate outbreak of a Palestinian *armed* revolution, he goes on to say:

If you and I did not burn
Who would light the dark night
Engulfing us
And all those sharing our plight?
How else could we see the way back
To the land of love and light?

In another poem, he says to a weeping refugee:

Correction

In Part II of «Palestinian Literature 1900 – 48», printed in *Democratic Palestine* no. 44, page 29, we omitted one line from the excerpt of Ibrahim Tukan's poem *«Al Fedai».* To correct this mistake, we print the excerpt below in full:

If he in prison died,
And not a tear
From a wife or friend
Was ever shed
In mourning for him;
If, coffinless, he was thrown away
On hill or plain –
Seek not to know
Where his body lies now
For his name, though unknown,
Is in the mouth of time.

What use is it to weep
When you have lost everything
And thus can lose no more?
So, wipe your tears,
and let us, together, walk along
Towards a horizon smiling with hope.

Let us scatter shining stars
Over our people's procession to red freedom:
Our homeland, brother, is never lost
So long as we keep it in our hearts.
So, wipe your tears
And let us, together, walk along.

Al Karmi's greater poems, however, are to appear *after* the *nakbah,* and are therefore beyond the time scope of this series. Extolling the beauty of Palestine, and asserting the meaninglessness of life without a homeland to live in, love and belong to, these are masterpieces of patriotic poetry, charged with sweet lyricism and enchanting imagery.

Of the other Palestinian poets of this period, mention must be made of: Abdul Rahim Mahmud, whom we considered in the previous article, and who was perhaps the most powerful and militant voice in both periods; Sa'id Al Issa, the ardent advocate of Christian – Muslim cohesiveness who, though a devoted Christian, extolled, as perhaps very few Muslim poets have ever done, the greatness of the prophet Mohamed and Islam; Mahmud Salim Al Hoot, author of *Arab Epics,* which consists of five epics on five landmarks in Arab history, including the *nakbah;* Ali Hashem Rasheed, author of *Songs of Return,* the Gaza poet whose sweet lyrics on the *nakbah* and the theme of return are studied in many schools throughout the Arab world; Kamal Nasser (1925 – 74), the militant poet and PLO leader who was assassinated in Beirut by Israeli agents; and, finally, Mahmud Nadim Al Afghani, who is often called the Poet of Palestine's Youth.

1939 – 48: The Prose

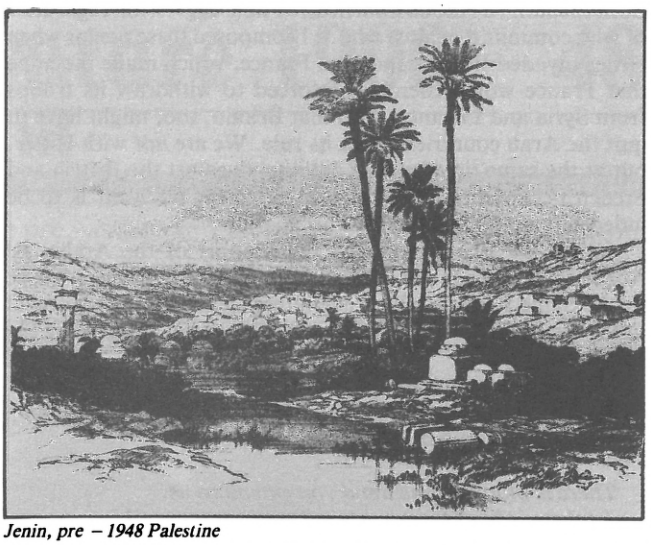
Just as Fadwa Tukan's loss of her brother stamped both her life and poetry with sadness, so did the death of Sultana, Khalil Al Sakakini's beloved wife, plunge the once happy and optimistic writer into a fathomless pool of bitterness and despair. In both cases, moreover, intolerable personal loss coincided with a historic national disaster, the *nakbah.* Likewise, just as Fadwa sang the saddest songs in pre – *nakbah* poetry, so were Al Sakakini's writings the clearest and strongest prose expression of the despair that engulfed the nation on the eve of the *nakbah.* In short, while the former told the story in poetry, the latter told it in prose.

Of his grief for his wife's sudden and untimely death, Al Sakakini writes:

> Your death, O Sultana, has caused me a heartache that neither tears, nor endurance, nor patience, nor work, nor reading, nor talking, nor sleep, nor the passage of days, can relieve. My eyes have lost interest in all sights; my ears,in all sounds.
>
> Were it not for my bashfulness, I would shun all company, shutting myself up in my room, where I can freely whisper to you and weep for you. Wherever I go or turn, your memory arrests me: Your image fills my eyes; your name, my mouth; your sweet voice, my ears. Who says you are absent from me?
>
> I used to believe that I loved life, but now I realize that it was *you,* rather than life, that I truely loved; for with your departure, life has become quite worthless to me.

Thus, his sorrow was so great that he couldn't help projecting it onto his very conception of life:

> What is this life, carrying us over from childhood to old age, from health to illness, from hope to despair, from joy to sorrow, and from life to death? The first day in your life is the first step to your death.
>
> If death is a fearful thing, then we had better fear its bringer – life. Would it not be better if there was no life at all, as this would be the only way to escape death? My fellow human beings, come, let us all die out!



Jenin, pre – 1948 Palestine

In his post – *nakbah* writings, however, this extremely pessimistic and nihilistic speculation gives way to a more carefully contemplated kind of pessimism. But to the last day of his life, his motto remained, «Life is vain; let's die out!»

The most outstanding prose writer of this period is perhaps Dr. Isaac Al Husseini, whose rational optimism seems to counterbalance, and even outweigh, Al Sakakini's speculative pessimism. He wrote twelve books, four of which fall within the scope of this article, namely, *Orientalists in England, A Hen's Memoir, Return of the Ship* and *Are Poets Mortals?*

In his preface to *Return of the Ship,* he remarks, «We believe that no nation is more competent than another; that each nation can, under favorable conditions, contribute its full share to civilization and progress.» Referring to the hardships suffered by the Palestinian people in their seemingly desperate battle against Zionism, he expounds his doctrine of optimism thus:

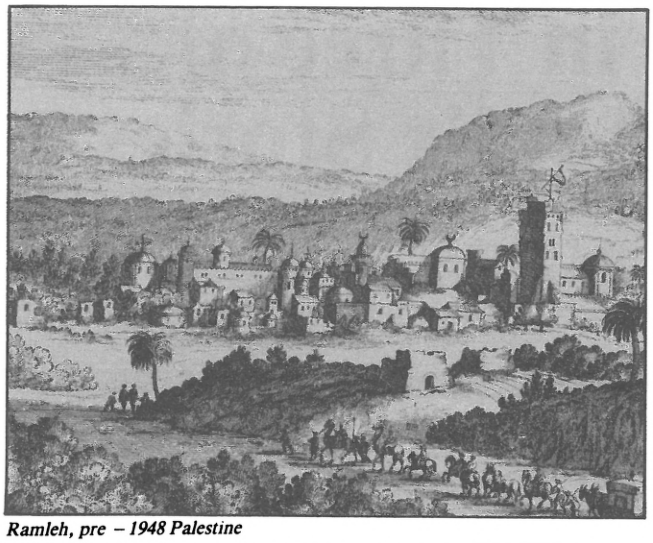
> Hardships are to nations what storms are to ships, in that they awaken the conciousness, and stimulate the strength, cooperation and solidarity of the people. If their consciousness is fully raised, and their strength, cooperation and solidarity fully exercised, they will either overcome their hardships or, at least, be on the right path to overcome them. If this is optimism, then optimism is our choice.
>
> The least that can be said of this doctrine is that it is useful and never harmful, whereas pessimism is harmful and never useful. No doubt, it is far more useful for the people boarding a ship in danger to do all they can to drive death away, than to sit sad and idle waiting for it or, worse, trying to convince themselves that death is not very bad after all!

On the individual's relationship with the community, he addresses an audience of high school graduates as follows:

> The first thing to know is that the interests of the community are prior to those of the individual; that the individual ought to respect the values and contribute to the welfare of the community.
>
> There are those who view themselves as giants and all others as dwarfs or ghosts, who would fight as lions when their personal rights or interests are threatened, but would shrink into extremely mild cats when the interests of their community are in danger.
>
> For centuries we have been living with this moral being – the community – absent or unheeded. Our social system has been seriously defective, stressing personal rights and ignoring social duties.

Of women's right to freedom and dignity, he writes in *Return of the Ship:*

> Our nation can never hope to meet success, nor can our ship reach the shore safely, unless the woman is enabled to exercise her full rights, unless her problems are addressed with due understanding and respect for her. Those who are reluctant to give her the understanding and respect that she truly deserves, need only know what our language «knew» long ago, when it stressed the correlation between woman and nation.



Ramleh, pre – 1948 Palestine

(The Arabic for *nation, umma,* is a direct derivative from *um,* which means mother.)

At another point he writes, «Political and cultural independence is incompatible with economic dependence.» He then expounds his attitude both to the past and to the West, as the major influences on the Arab society at present, as follows:

> If we are to cast one look at the past, then we have to cast two at the future; for we know perfectly well that time will not wait for us till we begin where our predecessors ended, or where developed nations began. We have to begin where these have so far reached, and thus make full use of the latest achievements of civilization. We have to take from the West whatever can stimulate our talents and breathe new life into our tradition.

Al Husseini concludes his book with the following remark: «History has not ended. It is going on, and it will keep going on so long as there is life on the face of the earth.»

The Short Story

This period witnessed the rapid development of the short story. Many of the «symptoms» of immaturity that characterized the short story in the previous periods, now disappear. Most important of all, short story writers seem to have learnt to be more subtle and less didactic, to pay more attention to the form and the narrative technique, and to achieve a formula whereby the content is well integrated into the structure of the work.

The short story writers of this period include: Khalil Beidas, Mahmud Seifeddin Al Irani, Najati Sidki, Isaac Al Husseini, Abdul Hamid Yassin, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and Jamal Al Husseini. This period also witnessed the appearance of two women writers, Najwa Ka'war and Asma Tube. But Najati Sidki's *The Sad Sisters* is perhaps the best collection of short stories in the whole canon of pre–*nakbah* Palestinian literature.

The collection consists of eighteen short stories, five of which belong to the period we are dealing with. They are: «The Living Corpse,» «The Sad Sisters,» «Days in a Lifetime» and «Simon Bouzaglou.» Giving its title to the whole collection, «The Sad Sisters» is the most representative work not only of the author, but of that particularly sad chapter in the history of Palestine. It was written in Jaffa in 1947, when the Zionists had already seized a considerable portion of the city and a number of its suburbs, notably Tel Aviv. In a symbolic manner, it tells the story of the city and, by implication, the whole of Palestine.

At the literal level, it is the story of five sycamores that used to stand in a row opposite an old Arab estate, maybe a house, school or mosque, located among Arab plantations in a Jaffa suburb, where Tel Aviv now stands. One morning, the five trees find themselves in a totally different, distressing world, with the old estate and plantations simply gone! Instead, they find themselves surrounded by high buildings inhabited by strangers (i.e., Jewish immigrants) and their cafes and clubs. The trees are sickened to find themselves, overnight, strangers in their own, age–old world, with the true strangers having, overnight, made themselves perfectly at home. Besides this heart–breaking irony, the trees that used to feel that they were an integral and, therefore, very significant part of their world, are now reduced to green *things* decorating a Tel Aviv sidewalk.

The narrator, a displaced Palestinian who shares the fate of the trees, sits beneath one of them, resting his head against its trunk. He falls asleep and, in a wonderful dream, sees the trees transformed into five sisters dressed in black, sitting in a circle, wailing. When they have cried their throats and eyes out, they decide to spend the night sharing memories with each other. They take turns according to age, and the eldest one tells of her infinitely happy past with her husband and children. So do the second and the third. With the story of the fourth, misery begins. She tells of the *thuwwar* (i.e., revolutionaries) who were hanged on the sycamore standing by her house, henceforth called the Martyrs' Sycamore. They, then, wait for the youngest, born in 1917 (when the Balfour Declaration was signed), to start her story. She hesitates for some time and then, pressed by their curiosity, she finally asks them, «Do you really not know my story? Don't you know why we are dressed in black, and why we are called the Sad Sisters?»

«Enough, enough!» they retort, weeping, «Don't tell us anything. The morning has overtaken us.» The story ends with the narrator saying, «As I woke I found myself lying beneath the five sycamores. An autumn wind was blowing savagely, blasting everything – man and bird and beast. Only these trees were not shaken. They stood as firm as a mountain.» It is interesting to note that the narrator's optimism was not ill–founded; for what are the *fedayeen* of the Palestinian revolution, and the *shebab* of the intifada, but the offspring of those sad, steadfast sycamores?

As was remarked at the outset of this series, pre–*nakbah* Palestinian literature has not received sufficient research. The reason for this lies, partly at least, in the fact that a considerable part of this literature was physically destroyed during the barbaric assaults launched by Zionist terrorist organizations in 1947–48 against the peaceful civilian population of Palestinian towns and villages. The libraries thereby destroyed (especially those owned by Jerusalem, Haifa and Jaffa intellectuals) are said to have been the richest ones in the Arab world. Moreover, pre–*nakbah* writers are now either dead, or dispersed in all corners of the earth, which makes it all the more difficult for the would–be researcher of that phase of Palestinian literature to obtain the necessary data. Other reasons relate to existing trends in literature research in this part of the world. Students of Palestinian literature usually find it safer and more rewarding, academically speaking, to address post–*nakbah* literature, where no such difficulties exist.

Finally, mention must be made of two pioneering works on pre–*nakbah* Palestinian literature, namely, *The Life of Modern Palestinian Literature* (see full citation in *DP* no. 43, 1991) and Dr. Kamel Al–Sawafiri's *Modern Arabic Literature in Palestine* 1860 – 1960, published by Dar Al–Ma'aref, Cairo, 1975. Both works, especially the first, have provided me with a considerable part of the data I so badly needed for the writing of this series. ●

The Woman in Three of Ghassan Kanafani's Stories

In July, we marked the martyrdom of Ghassan Kanafani, Palestinian writer and Politbureau member of the PFLP, who was assassinated by Zionist agents in 1972. In remembrance of his rich contribution to Palestinian literature, chiefly through short – story writing, we bring the following analysis by Mohamed Idris.

by Mohamed Idris

In many works of Ghassan Kanafani, the woman plays a peculiar moral role whose ultimate significance lies well beyond the immediate world of the works themselves. This essay attempts to trace and analyze this role in three of his short stories: «Till We Return,» «A Letter from Gaza» and «The Land of Sad Oranges.» But first let us see what each of them is about.

I. «Till We Return»

Set in the Naqab desert (South Palestine) around the year 1956, this story depicts a peculiar day in the life of a Palestinian freedom fighter. Tense and excited, he is crossing the desert to carry out a mission against an Israeli post erected on what was once his own land, the land which was the scene of the happiest days, as well as the most horrible hours, in his life. Hence his tension and excitement. While his feet were «wrestling with the hot desert sand, his mind was a racetrack for countless memories and feelings.» His tension and excitement rise as he comes nearer to his ex – home, now his target. He remembers what his commander told him: «It's your land. Didn't you live there? Well, you know it better than anyone. In one of the fields they have erected a water tower to irrigate the land which was always yours and your neighbours'. I think you understand. The amount of dynamite you have is sufficient...»

The smell of his land, which he left seven years ago, stirs in him memories which he has always feared to recall. Then, in a flashback, he revisualizes the events of his last day on his land. Here Kanafani presents three successive pictures – actually two, the second being implicit in the third. The first one shows Jewish gunmen sweeping the plantations and terrorizing their inhabitants into leaving them. The hero (who is to become the freedom fighter the story is about) realizes that he has to leave, at least temporarily:

> He pulled his wife by the hand and set off, but before he reached the gate of his field, he drew close to her and was stunned by a big tear in one of her wide eyes. He tried to resist the cruel feeling which that tear injected into his veins. But he found himself arrested by the heart – breaking questions which his wife's tear triggered in and around him: Where are we going? What of your land? Hadn't you better pay back to the earth what you owe it, even if you have to pay from your blood and flesh?
>
> Speechless, he took her by the hand again and pulled her back to the field. His soul's ear couldn't help responding to the good call from the wide eyes.

Then, fusing the second picture into the third, Kanafani presents the latter thus:

> That night, they hanged his wife from the old tree between the mountain and the open square. He could see her hanging, stark naked, with her hair, which they had shaved off her head, tied round her neck. Bright black blood was flowing from her mouth. It was hard to believe that just an hour before she had filled the square with bullets, fire and blood. They had skinned his back with their whips, and then tied him to the tree opposite to the one on which they hanged his wife. They tied him there to stare, helpless as a corpse, at his wife, and cry out like a madman. When dying, she bade him «Farewell,» they filled her mouth with earth. They let him go into the desert, believing that his memories would soon kill him.

But had they expected that these memories, instead of killing him, would drive him back to shatter with his dynamite the «peace» they had founded on terror and murder, they would certainly have never been so «generous» with him.

The flood of memories, we are told, is stopped by the great explosion of the giant water tower. As he reaches the camp, he finds the commander waiting for him by his own tent.

> «Has it gone alright?» He nodded, too tired to speak. «Are *you* alright?» He nodded again, more firmly, and added, «Have you prepared my mission for tomorrow?» Surprised, the commander said, «No. You can't go on a mission tomorrow. You must rest.» «I can,» he readily retorted. «Till when, do you think, can you go on like this?» «Till we return.»

II. «A Letter from Gaza»

Written in 1956, this story, too, depicts a crucial day in the life of the narrator, the letter writer. He is a young Gaza teacher who has been working in Kuwait both to support his mother and his dead brother's family, and to save up the money needed to cover his long – desired study of civil engineering in the US. His friend Mustafa, who has already been there, has recently sent him word to the effect that he, the narrator, has been admitted to the University of California, and that his residence there has been secured.

The action, presented through the narrator's letter of response to Mustafa in the US, actually begins with the narrator having recently come back to Gaza for his summer vacation. We are told that Gaza, his hometown, has always seemed to him an uninteresting, uninspiring place for a young man like him to live in for good; he has therefore been looking forward to leaving it for more stimulating and promising horizons. The US has seemed especially attractive to him. Thus the good news included in his friend's letter is expected to herald the chance for him to materialize an old dream. But in his own letter, the narrator surprises Mustafa with his irrevocable decision to remain in Gaza, and never leave it. He writes:

> When I took my vacation in June...I found Gaza the same as you and I had always known it...like a rusty shell that the waves had cast onto a sandy shore...Gaza with its narrow lanes and their special smell, the smell of defeat and squalor.
>
> That evening I bought some apples and went to the hospital to visit my niece Nadia, the beautiful girl with thirteen springs behind her. I knew that her mother and mine were hiding something from me, something they could not say to me by word of mouth...I loved Nadia – indeed, I liked all her generation, who had been suckled on defeat and homelessness.
>
> Nadia was lying in bed. In her eyes, there was sublime silence, and in the black center of each there glowed a still tear. Her face was quiet and motionless, like that of an aggrieved, suffering prophet. Though a child, she looked much older than a child...
>
> «Uncle, you are back from Kuwait?»
>
> «Yes, Nadia. I have brought you presents, many presents, from Kuwait. When you recover...I'll give them to you. Among them are the red trousers which you asked of me.» It was a lie that escaped from my mouth in a confused effort to ease the tension of the situation. But Nadia shuddered, as if

Women's moral force has proven itself during the intifada.

shocked by electricity or struck by lightning. She lowered her head in awful calmness, and I felt my hand, which was then lying in hers, becoming wet with big, hot tears.

«Tell me, Nadia, don't you like the red trousers?» She raised her head towards me, and looked as though she would speak; but, her voice failing, she clenched her teeth. From the heart of the murderous silence that followed, her faint voice reached my ears, as if coming from afar: «Uncle!» She stretched her hand and removed the white blanket that covered her body. Then, she pointed at her legs – her *one* leg, as the other was not there!

Having described this horrible discovery, the narrator now depicts its dramatic effect on him:

I'll never forget Nadia's sisterless leg. Nor can I forget the sadness that stamped her face and moulded her countenance. As I left the hospital and walked through Gaza's streets that day, my hand, tightly closed, pressed scornfully against the two pounds I had intended to give to Nadia. The bright sun filled the streets with the colour of *blood*. Gaza, dear Mustafa, was new, *quite new*. You and I had never seen it like that. Even the heaps of stones in front of Al Shaja'iyeh quarter, where we lived, were meaningful. Gaza itself assumed a new appearance, and a new meaning; I felt it was a *beginning*. Even the road to my house seemed to me nothing but a step to a long, long road leading to Safad. Everything in Gaza was shuddering in grief for Nadia's severed leg, grief and something else: a challenge, a will to restore the severed leg. I was told that Nadia lost her leg when she threw herself over her little brothers and sisters to protect them from the bombs and flames that were devouring their house. Nadia could have saved herself, could have spared her leg. Why didn't she?

Finally the narrator states his decision and points out his reasons for making it:

No, my friend, I'll not come to Sacramento. Nor am I sorry for that ...That vague feeling you had when you left Gaza – that pigmy feeling must grow into a giant in your heart...If it does not grow by itself, you have to look for it in order to find yourself... here amongst the rubble of the ugly defeat.

I'll not join you. *You* ought to rejoin us, so that you may learn from Nadia's severed leg what life is, what the value of existence is. Come back, my friend; we are all waiting for you.

III. «The Land of Sad Oranges»

This story depicts the forced departure from Palestine in 1948 of a large Jaffa family. As they approach the Lebanese border, they see a farmer selling oranges at the side of the road. (Oranges are to Jaffa what, say, coffee is to Brazil.) At that moment, the *women* tell the driver of the truck carrying them to stop, and they all get off the truck. The narrator, a young boy of that family, describes the scene as follows:

The women carried the oranges, and we could hear them crying. It was only then that I realized that oranges were beloved things to us; that those big, clean balls were so dear to us. They bought the oranges and brought them up to the back of the truck, where they had been sitting amongst the luggage. Then, your father, who was sitting in front beside the driver, came down and raised his hand to the women for an orange. Having got one, he looked at it in silence, and then burst into tears like a helpless, miserable child.

Source of positive values

It must have been noticed that each one of the stories summarized above dramatized a crucial event in the life of the hero. In each case, moreover, this event is of utmost *positive* significance; it has everything to do with the hero's status not only as a husband, uncle, citizen, freedom fighter, etc., but also as a human being. In «Till We Return» (henceforth referred to as «Till...»), for example, the hero's decision to defend his orchard and, having lost it, to come back several years later and attack its usurpers, is not only a crucial decision, not only an all – important moral choice, but an unfailing positive index to his *nature,* his *mind* and his *dreams.* No less significant is Nadia's uncle's decision in «A Letter...» to remain in Gaza, ▶

abandoning his personal aspirations for the sake of a greater and nobler cause.

What concerns us here, however, is that in both cases, the male's attitude was not so positive from the beginning – indeed, it was negative – and that, more significantly, the positive change is brought about by a female's influence. Nadia's «sisterless leg» and the «big tear» in the eye of the hero's wife in «Till...» do the whole job, symbolically.

The same thing can be said of «The Land...». It is the women who first see the organic connection between Jaffa and the oranges, who first conceive the immensity of their disaster and who, automatically and unwittingly, trigger a corresponding sentiment in the heart of the hero.

In fact, these are not the only works of Kanafani where this peculiar moral «mechanism» determines the whole action, underlies the hero's moral choice and, quite often, defines the theme(s). It is uncertain whether he himself was aware of this mechanism, but whether or not he intended it, it is at work in a considerable number of his works, including the ones we are examining now. Its presence does not so much reflect a certain feminist belief held by the writer as it, indeed, mirrors a cornerstone of human life, namely, the crucial, though often subtle, moral force exerted by females on the behaviour of all members of the community, *especially* the males.

Again, it is uncertain (and unimportant to us) whether the writer was conscious of this peculiar force: the artist, whether we think of him as one who reflects or reconstructs reality, or even as one who creates a reality of its own, need not be conscious of all the subtle laws that govern the reality he is dealing with. It is well known, for instance, that Shakespeare is rich in «psychology,» but few would contend that he was *aware* of the various and complex psychological laws governing the behaviour of his characters.

But so far we have not explained what we mean by the peculiar moral force we ascribed to the woman in the previous paragraphs. To do so, we have (first) to consider the particularity of the female condition, and (second) to examine the way this particularity is manifested in the works in hand.

Let us take the first point. Most people now recognize not only the sacrifice and extraordinary responsibility that are inherent in the woman's condition, especially at the reproductive level, but also her crucial role in determining the psychological, emotional and sexual lives of her children. It is wrongly assumed, however, that her role decreases as they grow up. True, their biological and emotional dependence on her does decrease; yet she continues to influence the males around her at a higher plane of experience – *morally*. The point is that while her biological and psychological effect on her children, especially during the early phases of their existence, is easily accessible to empirical observation and analysis, her tremendous and equally crucial, moral effect on the adult, especially the male adult, seems to defy the empirical approach which dominates the science today. Thus, the point we are dealing with here seems to fall within the province, not of science, but of moral philosophy, which conceives of the methods used by scientists as useful and necessary, but by no means adequate for analyzing and obtaining a comprehensive understanding of experience in its entirety, rather than in bits and pieces. Yet, it must be asked here: What has all this to do with Kanafani's stories?

This question brings us to the second point. It has been shown that in each of the stories, the male's positive response to experience – such as the hero's decision to remain in Gaza – is stimulated by a female's positive initiative. Likewise, the male's sudden realization of the immensity of his loss in «The Land...», which is symbolized by his crying over the oranges, is triggered by the *women's* action. The key question to be asked here is: is it mere coincidence that it is the women, rather than the man, who first see the oranges, which epitomize their homeland, their Paradise Lost? If so, why do *they,* rather than he, go and buy them, although he could do so more easily as they were sitting «amongst the luggage» behind, whereas he was sitting «beside the driver» in front? Apart from convenience, the customary thing in our culture is that, in such a situation, it is the man who undertakes the purchasing. Far from being a «realism gap,» Kanafani's reversal of roles, while giving the female the chance to exert her peculiar moral force on the male, is essentially his way, as an artist, of saying that convenience and custom, which determine what the female ought or ought not to do at the social level, are irrelevant to an experience whose focus is a value greater than convention, such as patriotism. A major philosophical implication of this is that the female's power increases as we move from lower to higher planes of experience.

Again, when he initially decides to leave his orchard, the hero of «Till...» suddenly changes his mind upon seeing that powerful tear in his wife's eyes. Her eye, which secretes tears at the lowest (physical) level of experience, is here a source of moral radiation at the highest. Similarly, Nadia's «sisterless leg,» though a *physical handicap* for her, is yet a generator of *moral power* for her uncle.

The woman's moral force

It is interesting to note that, in all these stories, the female's amazing ability to influence the male's moral behaviour has nothing to do with her/his strength or weakness, nor is it due to any social prestige. Let us read again this quotation from «Till...»:

> He *pulled* his wife by the hand and set off, but before he reached the gate of his field, he drew close to her and was stunned by a big tear in one of her wide eyes...(emphasis added)

A little later we come to know that this tear stimulated the greatest moral choice in all his life. Notice Kanafani's shrewd use of the verb *pulled* to signify the male's tendency to impose his will on the female, to have the upper hand in «doing things.» Immediately after, however, we read:

He tried to resist the cruel feeling which that tear injected into his veins..[But] his soul's ear couldn't help responding to the good call from the wide eyes.

Thus at a much deeper level than that of «doing things» (where personal strength and social power *are* crucial), the powerful though subtle influence of the female can mock, dwarf and even reverse the realities which the male has created through the exercise of his self – assigned and society – endorsed right to have the upper hand. The hero's pulling his wife by the hand – a *physical* action with *social* implications – is mocked, and its ultimate effect is reversed, by his failure to resist her *moral* influence on him. Very few writers, perhaps, have ever used juxtaposition so effectively and so beautifully.

Similarly, in «The Land..», the women's place in the truck (sitting behind amongst the luggage) is juxtaposed by the man's (in front, beside the driver). This is an epitome of the traditional leader – follower relationship between man and woman at the phenomenal level. Evidently, the man thinks it his right to lead, and the woman thinks it her duty to follow; and all goes well. Then we read:

[The women] bought the oranges and brought them up to the back of the truck, where they had been sitting amongst the luggage. Then your father, who was sitting in front beside the driver, *came down and raised his hand to the women* for an orange. Having got one, he looked at it in silence, and then burst into tears like *a helpless, miserable child.*

Thus the hero of social reality at a *phenomenal* level – the leader in a battle «full of sound and fury» but more often than not «signifying nothing» – when confronting an experience pertaining to a more *intrinsic* level of social reality, an experience signifying everything, such as the moral experience described above, suddenly gives up his «right» to lead, to have the upper hand. And in this quotation at least, he literally has the *lower* hand, not only abandoning his front seat and raising his hand to the woman, but also forgetting that a man (according to the «male code» of the battle referred to above) ought not to cry «like a helpless, miserable child.»

In doing so, Kanafani does not exaggerate; he does not violate the rules of the game as it goes on in real life. Rather, through his skillful use of the juxtaposition technique, he highlights a fundamental, though as yet unexplored side of the game itself.

Sense of responsibility

We are fully aware of the fact that our argument concerning the female's powerful moral capacity may raise many questions that we perhaps have not answered, though we believe that the examples we have examined testify to the presence of this capacity in the works at hand, and demonstrate the mechanism whereby it exerts itself. We are equally aware, however, that a further analysis of the matter might prove too «philosophical» for a literary essay, and lead the argument into fields of inquiry that have very little to do with Kanafani and his works. Yet there is one question which we feel we cannot possibly escape: What is the source of the peculiar moral force whose presence and power we have so far examined? What is the *cause* of the curious phenomenon whose *effect* we have traced in three of Kanafani's short stories? The attempt to answer this question might also shed light on some of the points we have so far overlooked.

It has been seen that in all the stories the females demonstrate a higher degree of *responsibility* than the males. In «Till...», for example, the woman's sense of responsibility assumes heroic proportions, motivating her to cling to her land and defend it to the last drop of her blood. Her husband's subsequent flow of courage and responsibility cannot be underestimated, but let us not forget that it is *subsequent* to hers; that it is she who awakens his slumbering sense of responsibility when he intends to give up his land to the Zionist

terrorists. Similarly, the hero of «A Letter...» demonstrates a great level of responsibility; but here, too, the heroine's sacrifice, great in its own right, is also the spark that inflames his conscience.

As a major moral force, responsibility, like love, must have an object. Pupils, for example, are the object of a teacher's responsibility, and so on. What is the object of the female's responsibility in the stories we are examining?

The homeland. In «The Land...» the women's extraordinary sensitivity to the oranges is an indisputable indicator of their responsibility to their homeland, symbolized by the oranges themselves. Similarly, Nadia's «sisterless leg» in «A Letter...» is at once a great example of sacrifice and an unfailing index to her great sense of responsibility to Gaza, which is a clear epitome of Palestine:

Nadia lost her leg when she threw herself over her little brothers and sisters to protect them from the bombs and flames that were devouring their house. Nadia could have saved herself, could have spared her leg. Why didn't she?

Because, needless to say, her sense of responsibility was far greater than her care for her personal safety. Taken literally and out of context, this quotation shows that her brothers and sisters are the object of her responsibility; but, symbolically, it is the homeland. What, it will be asked, is the textual evidence on which this interpretation is based? The answer to this question lies in her uncle's dramatic decision to remain in Gaza so as to struggle for it «amidst the rubble of the ugly defeat,» rather than just to look after his dead brother's family.

As for the woman in «Till...», her sense of responsibility towards her homeland is the cornerstone of the world Kanafani creates in the story. Let us re – read what her husband reads in her tear as they are leaving their orchard:

What of your *land?* Hadn't you better pay back to the earth what you owe it, even if you have to pay from your *blood* and *flesh?* (emphasis added).

The «blood and flesh» in this quotation reminds us of Nadia's «sisterless leg.» Both signify the female's sacrificial attitude to her world, especially when it is in danger. This is perhaps the highest level of responsibility that a human being can attain.

In trying to account for the woman's marked readiness to sacrifice herself for her family (as is, to some extent, the case in «A Letter ...»), and for her homeland (as is certainly the case in «Till...»), it is perhaps not unreasonable to attribute this readiness to the Original Responsibility and sacrifice that are almost inherent in the female condition. By highlighting these admirable aspects of the woman's moral role in life, Kanafani in effect does some justice to this often unacknowledged hero of humanity . ●

Eritrea's Victory

by Yafa Munir

Historical background

Near the end of May, two major events took place in Africa: the complete defeat of Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime in Ethiopia, and the climax of Eritrea's 30 – year armed struggle, which ended in freedom, paving the way for independence. These events will be recorded in the history of all liberation movements not only in Africa but internationally as well.

In 1952, Eritrea, a former Italian colony, was federated to Ethiopia by the UN, and then annexed by Emperor Haile Selassie in 1961. This last action led to the escalation of the Eritrean armed struggle for independence, waged at that time by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF).

At the end of the 1960s, a Marxist current grew in the ELF, believing that a socialist program could better realize their aims of self – determination and a free, independent Eritrea. In 1970, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) was formed by leftist cadres who had split from the conservative ELF in 1969. The EPLF quickly gained popularity among the masses and within a couple of years became the main force of the Eritrean struggle for freedom.

At the same time, opposition to Haile Selassie developed in Ethiopia, and in 1974 the old Ethiopian regime collapsed. Power was seized by Ethiopian officers who ruled collectively through a committee named Derg. This change in power, however, didn't change the regime's stand towards the Eritreans and their struggle. The battle against the Eritrean liberation forces continued, as it did after Mengistu Haile Mariam took power in 1977 and became the new ruler of Ethiopia. Not only did the new regime in Ethiopia keep a traditional stand towards the national question; it was also incapable of solving the country's many internal problems, mainly the social and economic crisis. This failure increased the dissatisfaction and unrest among broad sectors of the masses, who were thirsty for a real change in Ethiopia.

Balance of forces

The Mengistu regime's defeat and Eritrea's liberation are closely connected. Certain factors intertwined to create circumstances which led to both dramatic events. In other words, the balance of forces in Ethiopia tipped strongly in favor of both the Eritrean liberation forces and the opposition forces in Ethiopia.

The Soviet Union, which had been the main ally of Mengistu's regime – providing it with financial and military aid – abandoned it about two years ago. This left the Ethiopian regime without a powerful ally to support it and at the same time further worsened the already deteriorating economic conditions. The results of the economic crisis in Ethiopia: poverty, unemployment and famine, coupled with the regime's denial of the people's rights to true democracy, increased the masses' antagonism and made them rally around the opposition forces. Furthermore, Eritrean and Tigrean military advances over the years exhausted the Mengistu regime. In an attempt to preserve power and to

continue the unjust fight against the Eritreans and other national movements in Ethiopia, Mengistu sought and obtained Israeli support. This last action made it undoubtedly clear that the Mengistu regime's originally progressive role in the region had been exhausted.

Today the opposition forces in Ethiopia are united within the Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPDRF) which is composed of six organizations working within a national front, based on a democratic program. The EPDRF's main aims were to topple the Mengistu regime and establish a democratic government based on political pluralism. A significant element of the EPDRF's National Charter emphasizes the right of the nationalities to independence, as opposed to the National Constitution of the defeated regime which only gave the right to autonomy. Perhaps this explains the EPLF's coordination with the EPDRF over the past several years.

The EPLF, a Marxist – Leninist organization, has a broad base composed mainly of peasants and workers; it has been liberating Eritrea bit by bit since the mid – 1970s through armed struggle. Consequently, the same factors which weakened Mengistu's regime, and strengthened the Ethiopian opposition forces, also gave a push forward to the Eritrean liberation process, but the decisive force behind Eritrea's freedom was the popular struggle, organized by the EPLF.

The EPLF's program

Unity, a clear political line and sound leadership, coupled with self – reliance, were the major elements of Eritrea's struggle for independence. Since the early 1970s, the EPLF has been able to mobilize most of the masses and realize tactical and strategic achievements based on a program for ending Ethiopian domination in Eritrea and establishing an independent democratic state. To this end,the EPLF and the ELF ended their civil war in 1974 and concentrated all their efforts in the battle against occupation, although they never actually united in one organization.

At the same time, the EPLF has been preparing for independence by building an infrastructure in the liberated areas. They have developed agriculture to provide for their people's needs, and have also set up workshops to produce certain items like shoes and clothing. In addition to this, they have set up several hospitals, medical clinics and schools.

As was mentioned before, the EPLF has worked closely with the EPDRF, militarily and politically, based on a mutual agreement that prevents the latter from entering Eritrean land and on recognition of the Eritrean people's right to self – determination and secession. This is a clear demonstration that the EPLF is in complete control of Eritrea's territory. At the same time, the EPLF's decision not to participate in the interim government formed by the EPDRF, testifies to the former's determination to achieve independence. A recent example of cooperation between the two fronts is the official agreement that allows Ethiopia to use the port of Assab, which is its main access to the sea. In turn, the EPDRF officially recognized the Eritrean front's desire to hold a referendum on Eritrea's future, whereby Eritreans can vote for the type of relation they want with Ethiopia: independence, province or confederation. A UN – supervised referendum has been a priority for the EPLF since 1980, in order to gain international legality for Eritrea and safeguard its sovereignty in the future.

The ground – breaker of the Eritrean liberation process, and that which most enabled the Eritreans to achieve victory, is the *armed struggle.* For over 30 years the EPLF has steadfastly fought and given this form of struggle utmost priority. Although they suffered a military setback in the mid 1970s, due to the regime's escalated offensive, assisted by the Soviet Union, the Eritreans never wavered or surrendered. The opposite is true; they continued to fight and grow stronger. The EPLF was consistent and persistent in pursuing its goals, and its revolutionary practice never gave way to making concessions.

We can safely say that steadfastness and the accumulation of correct revolutionary struggle have been rewarded with victory. And since the Eritreans' struggle is an integral part of the international liberation movement, their victory is a victory for all just struggles, giving hope and encouragement to all people fighting for freedom. ●

Solidarity from Sweden

We received the following message of solidarity from the KPMLr (Communist Party Marxist – Leninist, revolutionary) in Sweden.

To PLFP and PLO:

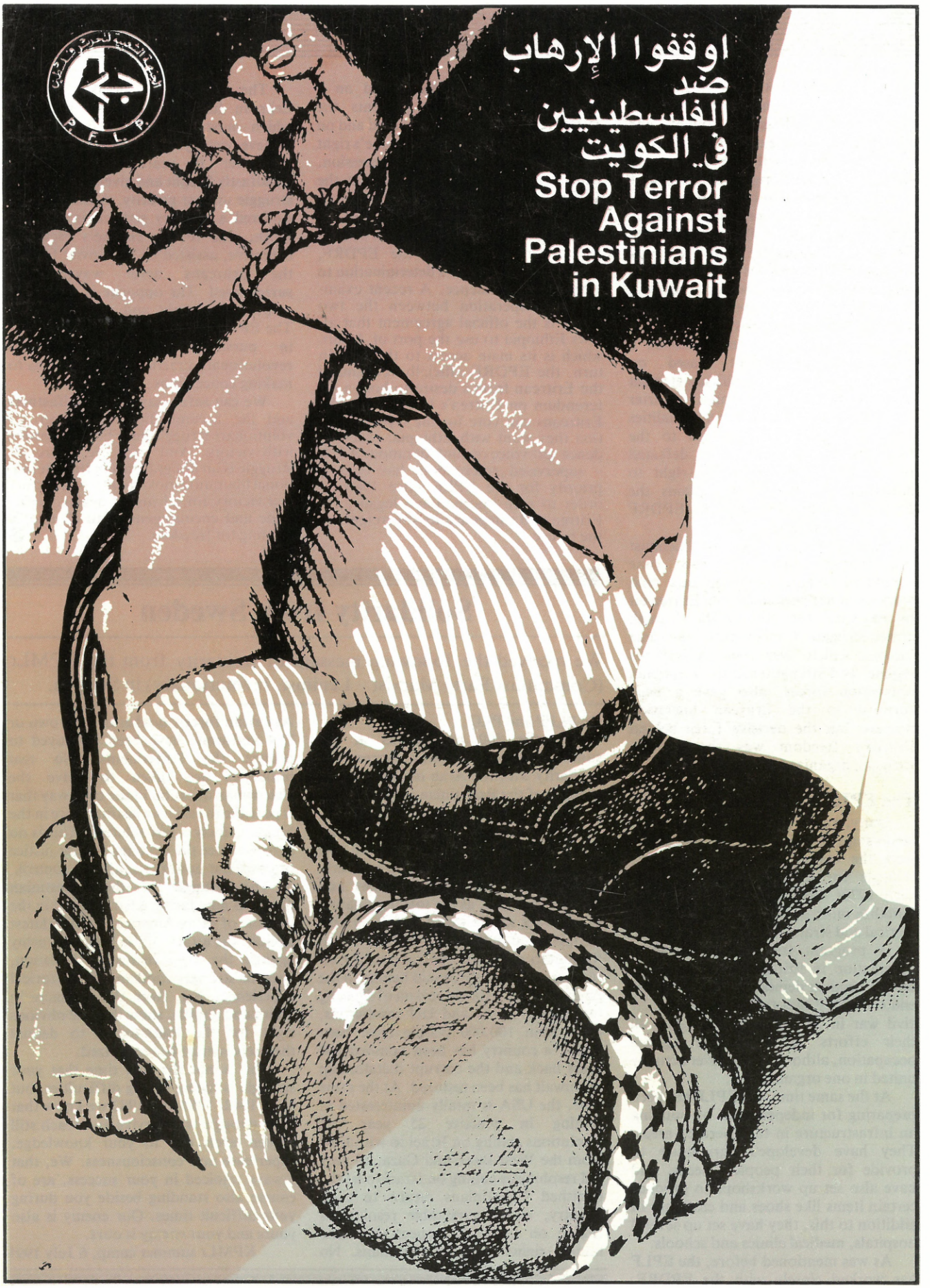
We the 500 participants at the summer camp of KPMLr express our solidarity with the Arab masses and the struggle of the Palestinian people.

When the dust after the Gulf war has now settled and the propaganda phrases diminished, the reasons for and the effects of the war can be still more clearly visible. With promises of money and threats, the USA, as the sole dominating superpower in the world, has been able to fight a war in the name of the UN with the aim to gain total control over the oil resources that justly should belong to the Arab masses. With the reason of fighting for human rights and UN resolutions, more than 100,000 people have been killed, a country has been bombed 100 years back and the corrupt dictatorship in Kuwait has been restored. At the same time, the USA is totally uninterested in putting in practice 25 year old resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza, 40 year old resolutions calling on Israel to let the banished Palestinians return to their country, and innumerable resolutions calling on Israel to respect the basic human rights of the Palestinians. No American forces, neither in their own or UN uniforms, have been employed to protect the Palestinians. No real initiatives are taken to solve the Palestinian question in the only way that is possible to reach «a lasting peace in the area,» namely a just solution. This is no surprise since the US aims are not justice or peace but power, wealth and control.

The struggle of the Palestinian people is now facing a hard period in the shadow of «Pax Americana.» The latest assault, the attack of the Lebanese army against the Palestinians in Lebanon, must be strongly condemned. Historical experiences, e.g. from the massacre in Sabra and Shatila, show that the obvious right for the Palestinians to defend themselves must be recognized.

This is not the first time that your struggle is facing strong difficulties, but as in 1948, 1967 and 1982 we know that your struggle will survive and reach still higher levels due to your knowledge, experience and consciousness. We, that always rejoiced in your success, are of course also standing beside you during your difficult times. Our enemy is also yours and your enemy is ours.

KPMLr summer camp, 6 July 1991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