

# **Inside the Anti-Occupation Camp**

**By Michel Warschawski**

**At** the end of February 2006, I was in Bil'in. It's a small Palestinian village located about a hundred yards from the separation barrier that Israel has built on the villagers' land. On the other side of the barrier, huge bulldozers are expanding the Jewish settlement of Modiin Illit.

The local committee of Bil'in and its Jewish partners in the struggle against the barrier had convened a two-day international conference on "non-violent struggle against the wall and the settlements." Two hundred or so Palestinian, Israeli and international activists were having lively and fruitful discussions on strategies for a joint mobilization against the settlement policy of the Israeli government.

*– Continued on Page 3*

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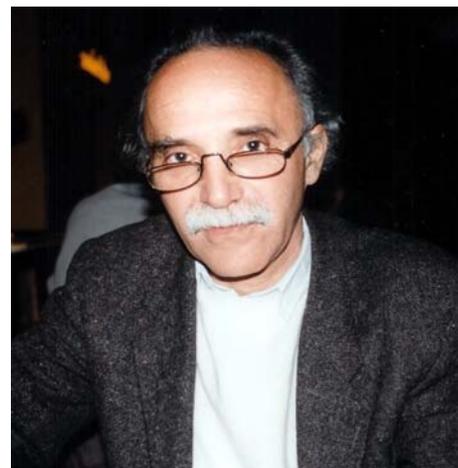
## About This Issue

Michel Warschawski—better known to his Israeli and Palestinian friends as Mikado—is a Polish Frenchman and a rabbi's son, who went to Israel at age 16 to study the Talmud. He became a journalist and peace activist, one of those rare writers who puts his body where his words are.

In 1984, along with Palestinian and Israeli activists, he co-founded the Alternative Information Center (A.I.C.). It combines grassroots activism with critical research, analysis, discussions, and the dissemination of information on Palestine-Israel.

In 1987, Warschawski was arrested by Shin Bet. Security agents ransacked his A.I.C. office, then took him off to their notorious cell number 20, a no-holds-barred prison where, until 1999, torture was practiced legally on a daily basis. For 15 days the rabbi's son refused to give up the names of his Palestinian counterparts, of leaders of the student movement, of trade unionists, or of activists in the women's organizations. He was eventually indicted, tried and sentenced, spending eight months in jail.

Today Michel Warschawski continues his struggle for peace and justice. Now, however, he labors against a political background that has changed drastically—for Palestinians and Israelis. What does this mean for those seeking real peace with real justice? We asked the veteran journalist/activist to look back at the history of Israel's peace



Michel Warschawski

movement to see how it arose and where it might be headed in a post-Sharon, post-Fatah standoff. His answer reminds us that the role of the prophet in Israel was not so much to predict the future as it was to confront the abominations of the present.

Two of Warschawski's recent books—"Toward an Open Tomb: The Crisis of Israeli Society" and "On the Border"—are available from our catalog on pages 14-15.

AMEU has been offering books on the Middle East, often hard-to-come-by books, for most of its 39 years. The program was begun by co-founder Dr. Henry Fischer, who initially used his garage to stock the books. That was back in the 1970's. Dr. Fischer, whose fulltime job was Curator of Egyptology at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, remained active on our board of directors until his death this past January. A testimonial to his memory is found on page 13.

John F. Mahoney,  
Executive Director

*(Continued from Page 1)*

At the end of the conference, the participants went to demonstrate at the barrier—at this place it is a wide system of fences and barbed wire, not a wall. Contrary to its usual mode of responding, the army did not attack us with tear gas and rubber bullets, maybe because so many foreigners were present. At the end of the demonstration, the general director of the Palestinian ministry of agriculture addressed the participants and hailed the presence, among others, of the Israeli peace camp. “We are not a ‘peace camp!’” whispered a young activist behind me, “We are the anti-occupation camp!”

The concept “Israeli peace camp,” like many concepts, has had its ups and downs. In these days, it has lost much of its popularity, which lasted for no more than two decades. Will it have a second chance? It is much too early to say.

### **Against Occupation**

When I first became involved in the struggle against the Israeli occupation, just after the June 1967 war, I joined an “anti-occupation organization” not a peace movement. That concept had never existed in Israel, and not by accident. A peace movement demands that a government stop war and make peace with the enemy. But, from 1948 to 1982, the vast majority of the Israeli public considered that war was imposed upon Israel by the Arab states and that the Jewish state was merely protecting itself against the danger of eradication. Even the 1956 war against Egypt, conducted jointly with Great Britain and France to regain control of the Suez Canal, was perceived as a preemptive war against alleged threats of an attack by Gamal Abdul Nasser.

The 1967 war was also perceived as a preemptive war against an Arab attack. Only a few dozen Israeli officials knew that was not the case. Four decades later, and despite plenty of documentation and interviews, the great majority of the Israeli public still believes that in both 1956 and 1967 Israel was forced into wars of self-defense.

In fact, even the June 1967 occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Sinai and the Golan Heights was for years considered an unavoidable consequence of Arab aggression against Israel. This is precisely why those few Israelis who denounced the oc-

cupation from its first days were identified—and mostly were—not only as being against the occupation, but being anti-Zionists, too. For they failed to share one of the main components of Zionist ideology and the culture of those days, namely, that the state of Israel is, and always has been, the victim of Arab aggression, while never itself an aggressor.

This is why, until the end of the Sixties, opposition to the occupation was fully identified with the anti-Zionist “Matzpen” group, a small socialist organization founded in 1962. In 1969, while a soldier in the Israeli army, I was interrogated for many days about my links with “Matzpen” simply because someone had drawn graffiti on the barracks wall with the slogan “Down with Occupation.” Such a slogan could have come only from Matzpen!

Peace activities in those days were limited to denouncing the Israeli occupation, demanding the unconditional restitution of the occupied lands to the countries from which they were conquered, and asserting the existence of a Palestinian people and the legitimacy of their national liberation struggle.

The issue of peace was raised for the first time in 1970, when Israeli prime minister Golda Meir barred Nahum Goldman, chairman of the World Jewish Congress, from meeting Gamal Abdul Nasser. Nasser had recently made several statements in favor of peace with Israel, and a hundred or so high school students had asked publicly if the continuous war situation was indeed the result of Arab rejectionism, or rather a political choice on the part of the Israeli government. These young Israelis even asked, in a widely publicized call, if they should refuse to do their military duty as long as their own government was not ready to consider the possibility of peace with its most important Arab enemy. The “Goldman affair” was the first time Israeli society started challenging the myth of “we have no choice but to make war for our very existence.”

But a real war was necessary to make this challenge a mass phenomenon. The war of October 1973 marked the beginning of the end of the old national consensus. The Egyptian-Syrian offensive was a total surprise for the government. Both the army and public opinion were fooled by the feeling of unlimited power generated by the victory of June 1967. In 1973, however, Israel came to experience its most severe

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military defeat and, thanks only to massive U.S. aid, did its army succeed in reversing the situation on the battlefield. As a result, the Labor leadership, which had been in power for almost half a century, first in the Zionist movement and then in the state, now lost much of its credibility. The state itself began to be perceived as vulnerable.

Even before the end of the 1973 war, a mass movement emerged demanding the resignation of the political and military leadership, and questioning the prevailing “no choice” philosophy. This movement, however, did not call itself a “peace movement” but a “protest movement,” for it had not yet reached the conclusion that peace and war were, partially at least, an Israeli choice.

That came in 1977, with the peace initiative of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, which served as the trigger for the creation of the first Israeli mass peace movement: “Peace Now.”

### **Peace Now**

Protest movements against the occupation and against the repression exercised by the Israeli military in the occupied territories had existed in Israel since the second half of the Seventies. These movements were composed essentially of several thousand Arabs and non-Zionist Jews. Peace Now, however, was qualitatively different: a Zionist movement, representing the labor-center of the Israeli population, and initiated by a group of reserve officers who defined themselves as patriots and their movement as Zionist and Jewish.

Peace Now is clearly a peace movement, aimed at mobilizing the Israeli people in order to ensure that their government does not let peace opportunities slip by. It was established as a direct result of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s peace initiative, which generated massive enthusiasm among the Israeli public, while at the same time provoking lots of counter-pressures among government coalition parties. The founders of Peace Now understood that public sentiment favorable to peace and to the withdrawal from occupied territories—the prerequisite to achieving peace—required a show of political force that could come only by mobilizing demonstrations in the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

During the two years following the Camp David

summit between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Sadat, dozens of mass demonstrations, mobilizing over 150,000 Israeli Jews, gave Begin the backing necessary to fight his own political camp in order to withdraw from Sinai and to sign the first peace treaty between Israel and its neighbors.

One can say that Sadat’s initiative made peace relevant for the Israeli public, and served as a major trigger for the creation of the first Israeli peace camp as such. Here, however, a clarification is important. The designation “peace camp” may be misleading. Most Israeli activists are not anti-militarists or pacifists, in the classical sense of the term. The founders of Peace Now were all reserve officers who insisted on their total loyalty to the army. In fact, Janet Aviad, who was one of Peace Now’s founders and later one of its spokespersons, could not sign the first appeal because she was not an officer. Even today, Peace Now strongly opposes “Yesh Gvul,” the movement of the reserve soldiers and officers who refuse to serve in the occupied territories. In Israel, being a “pacifist” does not mean being ideologically opposed to war, but rather being opposed to extreme forms of settlement expansion.

By the beginning of the Eighties, Israeli society was polarized between right and left. The right, led by the settler movement Gush Emunim, organized mass demonstrations against the withdrawal from Sinai, and initiated a new drive of settlement building throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The left, represented by Peace Now, not only supported the peace treaty with Egypt but started challenging, gradually, the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

### **From Bir-Zeit to Lebanon**

November 28, 1981, Manara Square in Ramallah: A couple of hundred demonstrators are protesting another closure of the Palestinian university of Bir-Zeit. The army gets the order to disperse the peaceful demonstration with tear gas, beatings and mass arrests—the brutality was unusual considering the presence of Israelis, including faculty members from Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The Manara demonstration was a turning point,

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and not only because of the tough tactics used by the army against Israeli demonstrators. For the first time, left-Zionist public figures joined ranks with non-Zionist activists who had been, for the last 15 years, mobilized against the occupation. This was the first time Israeli Zionists had been prepared to demonstrate with Palestinians. These Zionist activists, mostly academics, identified with Peace Now, but, unlike that movement, they were not indifferent to the systematic repressive measures taken by the occupation army in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The Solidarity Committee with Bir-Zeit University, established the day after the Manara demonstration, will serve as a model of a new type of protest movement in Israel, where non-Zionist activists brought their radicalism and contacts with Palestinians, and left-Zionists brought their public legitimacy, enabling these movements to have an impact on public opinion, and on the Peace Now constituency in particular.

Less than a year after the establishment of the Solidarity Committee with Bir-Zeit University, and after a series of Israeli provocations failed to elicit a Palestinian response that Israel hoped would end the U.S.-brokered cease-fire, the Israeli government decided to invade Lebanon. The Solidarity Committee, in response, took the name of the Committee Against the War in Lebanon (CAWL), thus becoming the first authentic anti-war movement in Israel.

Opposing the war in Lebanon was not obvious: an effective press campaign in Israel instilled fear in the public of "Palestinian preparations for an attack on the north of Israel with heavy armaments." No one was speaking yet about "weapons of mass destruction," but we were not far from these kinds of invented horror stories. Today, every child in Israel knows that Ariel Sharon planned to destroy the P.L.O. and to change the regime in Lebanon. Every child knows as well that the P.L.O. was scrupulously keeping the cease fire signed with the Israeli government one year before, and that it had no intention whatsoever of attacking Israel. But in May-June 1982, the great majority of the Israeli public fell victim to this propaganda, including Peace Now's leadership and its constituency.

During the first two weeks of the war, only the Committee Against the War in Lebanon strongly op-

posed the invasion, presenting it as it was: a brutal military aggression with mere political objectives. The great majority of Israelis still considered the war a preemptive operation limited to protecting the Galilee from a Palestinian mega-offensive.

Two weeks after the invasion, CAWL called for a demonstration in Tel Aviv, hoping to mobilize its usual 3,000-5,000 supporters. I was in charge of the demonstration's security and coordination with the police forces, and just an hour before the beginning of the demonstration I felt that something unexpected was happening. Hundreds of reserve soldiers, in uniform—who definitely did not belong to the radical anti-war movement—were joining the demonstration, some of them coming directly from the frontline in Beirut.

Eventually, we numbered 15-20,000, the largest demonstration ever organized by forces from the left of the political spectrum. Most of the participants belonged to Peace Now, and they openly expressed their frustration over their movement's silence. And, indeed, when we asked the Peace Now leaders to lead the mobilization against the war, their answer was: "When the cannons are shooting, the muses have to remain silent!" and while "their men" were risking their lives in the suburbs of Beirut, it would not be decent to demonstrate.

They were wrong. Confronted with the horrors of the war, the organized war crimes and massacres, and with direct evidence of Ariel Sharon's daily lies, including lies to the Knesset and to the government, "their men" were expecting that civilians would organize mass demonstrations in the streets in order to stop the war. Once again, however, the civilians were applauding the war government.

The unexpected success of the CAWL demonstration convinced Peace Now's leadership to change its position and, one week later, to organize its first demonstration against the war in Lebanon when, in Tel Aviv's main square, 100,000 Israelis, including thousands of reserve soldiers back from Lebanon, came together under the Peace Now slogan "No more a war like that!" (sic). From that day on, Peace Now became the leading force of a mass anti-war movement, which filled the streets of Israel until the withdrawal of the Israeli army from most of Lebanon in 1985. The huge demonstration against Israel's role

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in the Sabra and Shatilla massacres, in September 1982, will be remembered as the biggest demonstration in the history of Israel, even if today everyone agrees that the figure of 400,000 demonstrators was an exaggeration.

It fell to the more radical organizations, however, and in particular to the Solidarity Committee with Bir-Zeit University, to lead the campaigns against the occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and for the recognition of the P.L.O. These campaigns were based on the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to freedom and independence and the illegality of the occupation, which looked more and more like a colonial annexation. Such a position differed widely from Peace Now's position that was based on national pragmatism, with arguments like "The occupation corrupts our boys" or "The occupation puts at risk the Jewish-democratic character of Israel." While the more radical organizations had developed a real solidarity with the victims of the occupation and their struggle, Peace Now did its best to escape such a tendency.

### **Yesh Gvul**

When Ariel Sharon ordered the invasion of Lebanon, several dozen reserve soldiers and officers signed a petition announcing they would not obey any order requiring them to participate in a war which, according to the government itself, was not intended to protect the Israeli people. The title of this petition was "Yesh Gvul" which means, "There is a border" but also "There is a limit" and also "Enough is enough." While there have been several cases over the years of Israeli soldiers refusing to serve in the army, or refusing to serve in the occupied territories, this was the first attempt to organize a public and collective refusal.

I must confess that when, in a group of reserve soldiers and officers belonging to various left organizations, we discussed the petition, I was among the more skeptical participants: "Who, except us, will dare confront the holy Israeli army?" I asked. "Who will challenge the security argument?"

And I was dead wrong. The anti-war sentiment provoked by the invasion of Lebanon was extremely strong and grew very rapidly with the conduct of the war itself, the army's lack of preparation, the many

war crimes that characterized the invasion from its very first days, and, above all, the clear fact that this war was not a war of defense, but a planned operation to reach political goals that had nothing to do with Israel's security.

A few weeks after the invasion, dozens of soldiers were in military jail number 6 for refusing to join their unit in Lebanon, or, later on, for refusing to return to Lebanon after a traumatic experience there. Moreover, in the military units, the "refuseniks" as they were called, were not confronted with the hostility of their companions and officers, but, on the contrary, met with respect and sometimes even admiration. Political discussions were conducted in the battalions during "pre-Lebanon" training, and the popularity of Yesh Gvul was so high that the I.D.F. command was obliged to take it into consideration while planning new offensives. In one case, at least, the Israeli media reported that the army rejected a plan to attack Syria because of the risk of a mass refusal.

When it was my turn to refuse to cross the northern border of Israel, I was condemned to 35 days of military confinement (the usual sentence). Seventeen other reserve soldiers and officers were with me in military jail number 6, which made the refusenik's group a powerful loudspeaker for the broad anti-war sentiment in Israeli society. Though a small minority not only in our units but in the peace movement itself, we knew, after less than a year of military presence in Lebanon, that we were the true expression of the majority of the people, and we were perceived as such.

### **Once Again – an Anti-occupation Movement**

The large echo Yesh Gvul got during the Lebanese war made it relatively easy to launch a new call for refusal when the Intifada started, in December 1987. "We will not serve as a police force in the Occupied Territories; we will not participate in the repression of the legitimate mass struggle for freedom and independence," was our call to the Israeli public and to the army. And, as in the case of the invasion of Lebanon, this call was widely heard, and contributed to the process of de-legitimizing the Israeli occupation.

The first Intifada was a massive, popular, mostly

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non-violent, rebellion against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. And it took the Israeli public and its peace movement by surprise. Until 1987, the main problems that confronted the Israeli occupation forces were military actions conducted by semi-military underground organizations, which could be handled by security services and a wide network of spies and collaborators. There was no need for a massive military presence in the occupied territories. For most of the Israeli public, occupation was a provisory situation that would last until a political settlement was reached—which could take a very long time.

The mass demonstrations and the general strikes in every town, village and refugee camp in Gaza and the West Bank, obliged the Israeli army to radically change its strategy and to mobilize a large number of reserve units to repress the rebellion, and it forced the whole population of Israel to discover a Palestinian people united in rejecting the Israeli presence on its territory, and to understand that as long as the occupation continues, the daily life of Israelis will not be smooth and normal. The former Solidarity Committee with Bir-Zeit University, renamed “Day La-Kibush” (Occupation Basta!), was, as usual, the first to react to the upsurge and to launch a broad campaign of solidarity with the Palestinians’ struggle.

However, what characterized the Israeli movement against the occupation during this Intifada was the appearance of dozens of new organizations, movements and non-government organizations dealing with specific aspects of the Israeli occupation such as: Physicians for Human Rights, Rabbis for Human Rights, Public Committee Against Torture, Workers Hotline, etc.

An important feature of these initiatives, which involved thousands of Israelis, was the strong will to cooperate with Palestinians and to initiate joint long-term projects. Indeed, the Intifada broke the wall between the two communities, and created space for the beginning of a Palestinian-Israeli partnership against the occupation.

The actions of Day La-Kibush and other new organizations attracted more and more Peace Now activists, until their own organization decided to mobilize against the ongoing occupation. The involve-

ment of Peace Now in the struggle against the occupation not only strengthened in the public’s mind the illegitimacy of the occupation, or at least the need to terminate it, but also put an end to the old “no partner for peace” philosophy, and paved the way for the recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as the sole reliable partner to negotiate the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The first war against Iraq and the U.S. administration’s plan to establish a “New Middle East” provided the opportunity to force the Israeli government to open negotiations with the Palestinians, a perspective that was already entrenched in the majority of the Israeli public. It took no more than two years—and a change of government—to withdraw from the refusal to recognize the P.L.O. and to negotiate with it. The Oslo Declaration of Principles was a victory for the Palestinian people. It was definitely a victory for the various components of the Israeli peace camp, too.

### **The Peace Camp and the Oslo Process**

The signing of the Oslo Declaration of Principles (D.O.P.), in August 1993 provoked euphoria among the various groups within the Israeli peace movement. Their programs and aspirations seemed to be on the way to being realized. Their two main factions, however, did not draw the same conclusions. For Peace Now, the struggle against the occupation and for an Israeli-Palestinian peace stopped the day Yitzhak Rabin agreed to shake the hand of Yasser Arafat.

Now it was the government’s role to lead the process, with the unconditional support of the peace movement, whose actions had led to the agreement that it considered a total victory. Total, because nothing in the D.O.P. obliged it to reconsider the numerous crimes committed on the road leading from the first steps of Jewish colonization in Palestine to the White House ceremony. Moreover, at the last moment, Yitzhak Rabin imposed on Yasser Arafat a “denunciation of terrorism” letter which implied de facto that the century old conflict was not the result of Zionist colonialism and the dispossession of the Palestinian people from its homeland, but rather of Palestinian terrorism.

Obviously, the left activists didn’t share the same feeling. They felt that, in the new situation, the role

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of the peace forces was more important than ever. For the majority of these left activists, the Oslo agreement had a positive potential that could be fulfilled only if mobilizations and permanent pressures were put on the government coalition. Occupation didn't end with the signing of the D.O.P. and, in some aspects, became even harsher with the closures, which greatly limited the freedom of movement of the Palestinians, and the dramatic increase of settlement activities in the very territories Israel was supposed, according to the D.O.P., to give back to the Palestinians. Vigilance, mobilization and solidarity were the three components of the political action of the radical peace organizations, which adopted the slogan: "With the government when it is determined to go forward towards peace. Against the government when it is reinforcing the occupation!"

Two years after the signing of the D.O.P., the Palestinians were more disappointed than ever and worried about the real intentions of the Israeli (left!) government. Terrorist operations resumed, often as a result of provocations by settlers who understood, better than the left, that nothing is irreversible in what the left calls the "peace process," and that they have the means to try to stop it. Indeed, the left sunk into a real blindness based on a kind of historical determinism, a blindness to the realities of occupation and the strengthening of the right, and a deafness to the calls of Palestinian leaders and activists, with whom they had cooperated for a while in the past, and who couldn't understand why, precisely at this crucial moment, the Israeli peace movement continued to support a government that violated more and more signed agreements.

The left wing parties in the government have always had a destructive impact on the mainstream peace movement, and even more so when the government has committed itself to make peace. One must have been totally blind, however, not to see that peace, i.e. the necessary compromises for an honest and bona fide implementation of the D.O.P., was the object of a political battle within Israeli society, in the ruling elites, in the government itself, inside the Labor Party, and even—as his biographers pointed out—inside the head of Yitzhak Rabin. One needed therefore to be very active in order to keep the peace process going forward and not backward.

This was exactly what Uri Avnery, a political journalist and previous Knesset member, understood when, in 1993, he and several dozen mostly non-Zionists and some disappointed Peace Now activists established the Peace Bloc (in Hebrew, Gush Shalom). Its aim was to continue the struggle against occupation, at the very moment when the left had returned to power and Peace Now had entered a coma from which it has yet to recover. During these crucial years of the "peace process," Gush Shalom, together with the women's organizations Bat Shalom and Women in Black, kept a permanent mobilization against the ongoing occupation and the wasted hopes invested in the Oslo agreements.

It is important, as well, to emphasize the particular role of the human rights organizations. Though not committed to mobilize directly against the occupation, they have strongly contributed to unmasking the reality of the occupation and the systematic violations of human rights and international law. This is important if one takes into consideration that these organizations usually are ideologically closer to Peace Now than to the radical left. Their deep and consistent commitment to human rights values however, brought them to share with the more radical wing of the peace movement, an ever more systematic denunciation of occupation, at a time where the very concept of occupation was disappearing from the lexicon of most peace activists.

The "peace process" era is characterized by a huge paradox: at the very moment when reconciliation between the two peoples was on the official agenda, Palestinians and Israeli peace activists were becoming more distant, both on the level of their respective perception of reality and on the level of their respective aspirations. The relative trust and the partial cooperation, which developed throughout the Eighties, have gradually been replaced by, first, indifference (from the Israeli side) and then, from the Palestinian side, by disappointment that gradually transformed itself into a feeling of betrayal. For Israelis, both sides have to negotiate peace according to the principle "the smarter is the winner." For the Palestinians, on the contrary, occupation is going on and even getting worse; the agreements are gradually emptied of their content and systematically violated by the Israelis, both in their text and in their spirit. And at a moment when, more than ever, they

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needed the assistance of the Israeli peace movement to pressure its government to negotiate an honest agreement based on the promises made at the beginning of the process, the Palestinians discovered that their yesterday allies were busy with their own national reconciliation and the rebuilding of a national consensus in order to spare them a confrontation with the right.

The renewal in 1995 of acts of resistance, including terrorist actions, took the Israeli peace camp by surprise. The common reactions: Why the hell are the Palestinians breaking the truce, when we are giving them a state and everything looks fine?! Why are they rejecting the tougher and tougher closures imposed on their territories since the beginning of the process? Isn't it the beginning of a border between them and us? Isn't it the start of separation?

Separation! This is for Israeli society, especially for the pacifists, the quintessence of peace, its most important quality, its *raison d'être*. They are there, in the mud of Gaza that had suffered 30 years of what economist Sarah Roy described as "de-development," and we are here, in our "Jewish and democratic" state. They will not interfere in our affairs, we will not interfere in theirs—except, of course, for security reasons which, translated, means limiting their freedom of movement and controlling their space, natural resources, and borders. These borders, anyway, remain to be defined, but it is a small matter, which will be negotiated in the framework of a national dialogue with the settlers.

Few on the left challenged this concept of peace or warned against the dangers of the bloody deadlock it could bring. But some did: Women in Black, Bat Shalom and Gush Shalom among the political organizations; Tanya Reinhardt, Baruch Kimmerling, Oren Yiftachel and Ran Hacoen in the academic world, as well as intellectuals like Meron Benvenisti, Azmi Bishara and Yitzhak Laor; in the media there were Gideon Levy, B. Michael and Amira Hass. But all these were isolated and perceived as troublemakers. Most Israelis lived as if peace were already a reality, and if the military operations had cooled the euphoria of the peace activists, they remained convinced that the "process" was progressing, and the Palestinians would finally have a state of their own, due to the good will of the Israeli government.

## The Collapse

Camp David dealt a terrible blow to the pro-peace Israelis, who had, until then, constituted the majority of Israeli public opinion.

When Ehud Barak came back from the Camp David Summit in July 2000 to announce the end of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the Israeli peace camp was already totally demobilized by the illusion of a peace already realized. Barak presented to the Israeli public Arafat's rejection of the "most generous offer" as evidence not only of the Palestinian leader's lack of moderation, but also of his "hidden real intention," the destruction of Israel.

Mystified by a colossal but extremely efficient lie, Israeli public opinion reverted to its old reflexes, feeling once again that the Jews are not accepted, and never will be accepted, by their neighbors and that they will have to fight for their survival forever and ever. Common sense and recent experiences were smashed by the old fears, shaped by 50 years of war and maybe 2000 years of history.

The peace movement was the main victim of this dramatic change. Already, in July 2000, long before the beginning of the second Intifada, prominent left intellectuals and liberal journalists had initiated a campaign aimed at re-assessing the political reality. Writers such as A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz had explained that the Palestinian demand for the right of return of the refugees was evidence of their bad faith and their aspiration to destroy Israel. Journalist Ari Shavit had warned that the Israeli public must stop dreaming about peace and normality and remember that Israel shares the fate of the Jewish people who have never been accepted by the nations and who are thereby condemned to permanent warfare for their very survival. And historian Benny Morris cautioned that one has to understand the "oriental mentality" that is the root of Palestinian rejection of Israel's existence.

Within two months, the Israeli peace movement disintegrated, not only as a political current able to mobilize hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, but as a political and ethical discourse. Most of its leaders joined the new consensus about a war of survival and became, in the media, the universities and in Israeli public opinion, the loudest advocates of the

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"We have no partners" argument. Between August and November 2000, we witnessed a generalized pathetic *mea culpa* from the leaders of the former peace movement, and the most common media headline was "The left has lost its way."

This left, however, didn't remain for long without a perspective: after the renewal of the confrontations between the Palestinians and the Israeli army, and more so with the beginning of a new wave of suicide operations, it fully endorsed Sharon's total war against the Palestinian people.

George W. Bush's September 11, 2001 declaration of a "global war against terrorism" gave Israelis, including former peace camp members, a tremendous push to endorse their own, non-ending, preemptive war against the Palestinian people, who are now seen as terrorists in the same way that some U.S. strategists identify Afghan or Iraqi factions as terrorist entities.

This explains why, despite five years of a bloody war against the Palestinian people and thousands of innocent civilian casualties, the mainstream Israeli peace movement has been almost totally absent from the scene, and, unlike during the first Intifada, it has never organized a mass movement of protest against the crimes of the Israeli army in the occupied territories or against the government's policy that was behind these crimes. This also explains why a substantial part of what had been the Israeli peace movement supported Ariel Sharon's unilateral moves, e.g., the separation barrier and the unilateral redeployment from Gaza; it also explains why they plan to vote for his new party, Kadima.

The truth of the matter is, however, Ariel Sharon was not and never claimed to be, even in the last few years, a man of peace. He never intended to reopen negotiations with the Palestinian leadership, let alone reach a "fair compromise" capable of ending this century-old conflict.

On the contrary, any honest evaluation of Sharon's many speeches and interviews over the past five years, and especially since he became prime minister in 2001, reveals a consistent and coherent political vision, which can be summarized in four points:

1. The war of 1948 has not ended and Israel's final borders should not be fixed for the next 50 years;
2. During this time Israel's priority is to create Jewish continuity from the Mediterranean to the Jordan river through a never-ending settlement drive;
3. To maintain the demographically Jewish nature of Israel, the Palestinians are to be excluded from the state through their expulsion ("Jordan is the Palestinian state") or their enclosure within "Indian reservations" (cantons) which, if they want, they can call their "Palestinian state."
4. The creation of this "Palestinian state" and the establishment of both its borders and prerogatives will be unilaterally decided upon by the government of Israel.

Israel's unilateral redeployment from the Gaza Strip was supposed to be the first step in this long-term strategic plan. The next step, following the March 2006 elections, was to be a drive to increase settlements along with withdrawals from areas with high concentrations of Palestinians. The question now is whether Sharon's plan will continue to represent Israel's strategic framework. Given the unprecedented state of turmoil in Israeli politics, no one dares to predict what the situation will be the day after the elections.

Should the Palestinian people be happy about this internal political turmoil? Not necessarily. As a Palestinian spokesperson said recently, "When an Israeli prime minister doesn't know what to do next, he always has the option of strengthening the repression against the Palestinian people."

There is, of course, another reason to be sad: Ariel Sharon will be one of the many war criminals who died without having been brought to an international court of justice; his victims will not see him judged for the crimes he has committed over the past 50 years.

Meanwhile, a mainstream Israeli peace movement is non-existent. People ask me if the election of Hamas will have an impact on the Israeli mainstream peace movement. My answer is you can't have an

impact on a peace movement that's in a coma. The fact is its former constituency is confused in a way never seen before, and it is an open question whether it has any chance of recovering.

### **A New Anti-colonial Trend**

Not all Israeli peace activists, however, have been the victims of Barak's big lie. Not all have given up the belief that peace with the Palestinians is possible. Already in July 2000, they were saying: "We didn't lose our way!" The failure of Camp David, they explained, was built into Barak's political plans and was the result of the way various Israeli governments had emptied the D.O.P. of content. With the renewal of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, at the end of September 2000, the radical organizations of the peace movement—Women in Black, Yesh Gvul, Gush Shalom—as well as the Palestinian population of Israel mobilized in order to denounce the terrible repression in the occupied territories as well as the occupation itself as the cause of the dramatic deterioration of the situation.

In the media, critical voices were raised, including from personalities belonging to the political establishment, like former minister Shulamit Aloni who accused Barak and later Sharon of pushing Israel towards a total war against the whole Muslim world. In the autumn of 2000, Akiva Eldar, senior journalist at Haaretz daily, unmasked Barak's "generous offers," and Amira Hass and Gideon Levy, both also with Haaretz, tried to alert the public about the harshness of the repression in the occupied territories.

During the past five years, the "peace movement" in Israel has become synonymous with the movement against the occupation, and is limited to its more radical wing. While it is impossible to list the numerous organizations and initiatives that have saved the honor of Israeli society, it is worthwhile to try to characterize this phenomenon, first in terms of generations. A generational vacuum of nearly 20 years exists between the Lebanese war in 1982, and the second Intifada that began in 2000. A whole generation turned its back to political activism and went into a kind of process of individual normalization. Throughout the first Intifada and during the Oslo era, most of the activists had been in their twenties

during the invasion of Lebanon. The average age of Gush Shalom activists is 50, Women in Black are in their 40s.

With the second Intifada, a new generation is taking the lead against the occupation. Most of the "Anarchists Against the Wall" who organize daily non-violent confrontations with the army at the wall are teenagers; "Taayush" — a movement of Jews and Arabs established as an answer to the harsh repression of the Palestinians of Israel in October 2000, and active in organizing solidarity convoys to besieged Palestinian villages — is mostly composed of men and women who had never been active before the second Intifada. As for refusing to serve in the occupied territories, it is important to note that the movement is no longer organized by Yesh Gvul veterans only, but by "Courage to Refuse," a new organization of refuseniks directly politicized by the new wave of repression in the occupied territories. This new generation of activists, often with no political experience and ideology, is motivated mainly by a strong feeling of injustice.

The second characteristic of the new anti-colonial movement is its rejection of realpolitik. These activists say "no" to what they believe to be morally unacceptable. Unlike their predecessors, they don't try to convince the "moderates of Peace Now," if only because they don't seem to exist anymore. Thus, one will find in their statements few calls for peace, but many firm and uncompromising denunciations of the occupation.

Third, in its majority, this new resistance movement considers its struggle in the framework of solidarity and cooperation with the Palestinian people's own resistance. Though most of their actions are obviously oriented towards Israeli public opinion, the need to establish links with Palestinian organizations is permanent, in order to show to both communities that there is a partner for peace and coexistence.

At a time when Israeli politics is focused around the building of a wall aimed at herding Palestinians into bantustans and separating them from Israelis, cooperation between the two peoples is more important than ever. It proclaims not only the rejection of the imprisonment of the Palestinians, but also the strong belief in possible co-existence and partnership based on mutual respect and equality. This is the

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meaning of the Arabic word *Taayush*, rightly chosen by the young activists of this new movement. But, above all, it expresses the refusal to be enclosed in a new ghetto, which turns its back on the Arab environment and drives pell-mell towards a permanent war and a fast degeneration into a messianic fundamentalism that ultimately will lead Israel to its death. The legitimate fear of such a prospect is precisely what motivates these few thousand Israeli Jews who refuse to follow the wolves in uniforms or the rabbis who call for a holy war.

Back to Bil'in: On the way home to Jerusalem, I spoke with Yoni, one of the "Anarchists Against the Wall" who are organizing the joint Palestinian-Israeli struggle against the wall. He is not yet 20 years old but already has a long history of demonstrations and arrests by the Israeli military. "We are definitely not a peace movement! After the so-called peace process, the concept of peace has no meaning anymore. Even Sharon the Likudnik has a 'peace program.' We are anti-occupation activists; occupation and colonization are the problems, and only by resolving these problems can one achieve peace, or at least, a no-war situation that could lead to peace. I would rather be called 'anti-colonialist' because colonialism is the core of the issue."

I tell him how impressed I am by the healthy relationship they have managed to develop with the young Palestinians from Bil'in and other villages in the area, and that this kind of partnership is the most living example of building a bi-national future.

"Why bi-national?" asks Yoni, "I am against nations and I don't feel I belong to a nation. We belong to humanity, and our goal is to build this humanity, without walls, without borders."

"Do you think your friends from Bil'in think that way?" I rejoin. "Don't they carry Palestinian flags in your joint demonstrations? Have they overcome the national dimension of the struggle?"

Yoni, who has an open mind, didn't answer: "I have to think about it..."

The new generation of Israeli activists clearly represents a break with the previous generations, in its motivation, in its values, in its lack of ideology, in its mode of actions. It belongs to the "Seattle generation," a global cross-borders phenomenon of young

women and men who believe that "another world is possible," without wars, without borders, a generation that categorically rejects the taboos and false evidence of their elders, especially the perception of the other as a permanent threat and a world vision of a permanent war for survival.

On the contrary, they believe in humanity and are pushed to act by a very strong sense of justice. This sense of justice, and not ideology, is what is driving them to resist the dominant discourse of permanent war and clash of civilizations. They offer Israel its only way of getting out of its self-imposed ghetto, and to rebuild the hope of a future of coexistence and partnership in the Arab East.

In a nutshell, the new Israeli peace movement is a movement for Right and Justice, repeating in the streets of Tel Aviv and the fields of Bil'in the very old slogan of all the dissidents of the modern time: "No Peace Without Justice!" ■

### Archive of Past *Link* Issues

AMEU has completed a decade-long project to create an on-line archive of all issues of *The Link*. AMEU, established in 1967, approaches its 40th anniversary year with an archive of 195 *Links* and a number of Public Affairs papers.

Every *Link* is available for download at [www.ameu.org](http://www.ameu.org) in PDF. In addition, the text of most issues can be downloaded separately, printed, or emailed from the website. The archive can be searched by word or phrase, author, subject, and year. A catalog describing the contents of each issue is available on the site.

While each issue of *The Link* lists selected books and videos available from AMEU at discount prices, the website carries the complete catalog for on-line purchases.

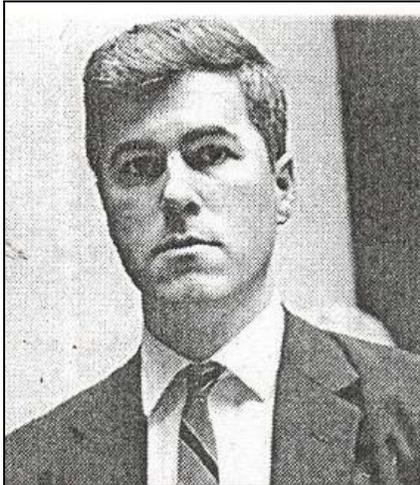
A grant made possible by the late Grace Halsell, longtime AMEU board member, provided the seed money for the archive project.

## In Memoriam

### Dr. Henry G. Fischer

Chances are, if you've ever been to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, one of the memorable experiences you left with was walking through an actual two-thousand-year-old Temple.

Egypt's renowned Temple of Dendur was commissioned by Emperor Augustus of Rome around 15 BC. In 1963, it was removed from its original site in Dendur to higher ground to protect it from the rising waters of the Aswan High Dam. Two years later, the Egyptian government donated the temple to the United States in gratitude for American help in rescuing other monuments from submersion, like those at Abu Simbel. The Temple's stone blocks, weighing over 800 tons, were loaded into 661 crates and reassembled in the Metropolitan's Sackler wing, where it continues to awe visitors.



The visitors can thank Dr. Henry Fischer. From 1964 to 1970, Dr. Fischer led the American Committee to Save Abu Simbel, and it was Dr. Fischer who convinced President Johnson to have the stones reassembled inside the Metropolitan.

Following his graduation from Princeton in 1945, Henry George Fischer taught English literature at the American University in Beirut before going on to receive his doctorate in 1955 from the University of Pennsylvania. After an assistant professorship of Egyptology at Yale University, he joined the staff of the Metropolitan, where he became Curator of Egyptology, and later Curator Emeritus, a title he held until his death this past January.

When Henry returned to the States in the 1960's

he, like so many Americans who had lived and worked in the Middle East, was surprised by how little Americans knew about the Palestinians. So, in 1967, along with a businessman (Jack Sunderland), a Presbyterian elder (Rev. Humphrey Walz), a health care advisor (Dr. Helen Hilling), the former head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (Dr. John Davis), and the Secretary of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (Msgr. John Nolan), Henry co-founded our organization.

He valued books. Our Book Program was "his baby," and over the years we have sold some half-million dollars worth of books, many to libraries all across the country. And many of these, in the first years, at least, were hard-to-find books imported from England.

Poetry, though, was his passion. In a collection of poems on Palestine and Iraq (see our website [www.ameu.org](http://www.ameu.org)), he noted that he did not consider the Palestinians to be any more virtuous than any other sizable population, but "the losses, privations, and injuries they have suffered have hardly, in this country, been accorded the understanding and sympathy they deserve." His first poem in the collection is entitled "Can You Be Quiet?":

*O do you know that it is so,  
And if you do, can you be quiet?  
Would you not cry, would you not cry it?*

*Do you not know that it is so  
Appalling you cannot forgo  
The need to tell them, who deny it?*

*On this, on any day of woe  
Would you comply with what you know  
To be a lie, and justify it?*

*O can you know that it is so,  
And yet be quiet?*

Henry used to quip that an appointment to AMEU's board of directors was like an appointment to the Supreme Court—it was for life. What kept Henry on our board, however, was not the appointment, but the knowledge that he could not be quiet.

—John Mahoney

# AMEU's Book Selections

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See Page 15 For AMEU's Video Selections

Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Ateek, N.	Justice and Only Justice	1989	227	\$13.50	\$10.50	A Palestinian theology of liberation.
Burge, G.	What Land? Whose Promise?	2003	286	\$23.00	\$17.50	What Christians aren't told about Israel & Palestinians.
Chacour, E.	We Belong to the Land	1990	216	\$10.00	\$7.50	What Palestine means to its Christian population.
Chacour, E.	Blood Brothers	2003	240	\$12.95	\$10.95	Updated ed. With intro. By James Baker III.
Chapman, C.	Whose Promised Land	2002	329	\$17.99	\$12.75	Zionism and role of biblical promise; updated edition.
Chapman, C.	Whose Holy City?	2004	253	\$15.99	\$12.50	Jerusalem and the future of Middle East peace.
Chomsky, N.	The Fateful Triangle	1999	578	\$22.00	\$16.95	United States, Israel, and the Palestinians.
Cooley, J.	An Alliance Against Babylon	2005	258	\$26.95	\$17.95	Traces the Israeli factor in the US-led invasion of Iraq.
Dajani, S.	The Untold Story	2005	71	\$15.00	\$15.00	The cost of Israel's occupation to Palestinians.
Eddy, W.	F.D.R. Meets Ibn Saud	2005	46	\$25.00	\$20.00	A reprint of the 1954 edition; limited number available.
Faber, S.	Radicals, Rabbis, and Peacemakers	2005	252	\$19.95	\$15.95	Conversations with Jews against the occupation.
Fayez, J. ed.	The Colonization of Palestine	1992	48	\$9.95	\$4.00	List & description of destroyed cities, towns, villages.
Finkelstein, N.	Beyond Chutzpah	2005	332	\$22.50	\$17.50	The misuse of anti-semitism & the abuse of history.
Fishbach, M.	Records of Dispossession	2003	467	\$39.50	\$28.50	New facts and figures about the land "swap" of 1947-48.
Giladi, Naeim	Ben-Gurion's Scandals	2003	340	\$18.95	\$15.50	Updated and revised edition.
Grodzinsky, Y.	In the Shadow of the Holocaust	2004	280	\$19.95	\$16.95	The forced role of Holocaust Jews in Israel's founding.
Hagopian, E., ed.	Civil Rights in Peril	2004	322	\$22.95	\$15.50	The targeting of Arabs and Muslims.
Halper, J.	Obstacles to Peace	2005	93	\$19.95	\$15.50	Camp David's UnGenerous Offer; 15 full-page maps.
Khalidi, R.	Resurrecting Empire	2004	223	\$23.00	\$17.95	Columbia professor looks at U.S. role in Middle East.
Kushner & Solomon	Wrestling with Zion	2003	379	\$12.95	\$11.95	Progressive Jewish-Americans on the Is.-Pal. Conflict
Masaalha, N.	Expulsion of the Palestinians	1993	234	\$11.95	\$9.50	Examines Zionist concept of Transfer, 1882-1948.
Nathan, S.	The Other Side of Israel	2005	310	\$25.00	\$17.50	How non-Jews are treated in the Jewish state.
Reinhart, T.	Israel/Palestine	2002	208	\$11.95	\$10.95	"Deserves to be read by every American" Edward Said.
Rose, J.	The Myths of Zionism	2004	232	\$23.95	\$15.50	The myths that justify Israel's expansionist policies.
Said, E.	Culture and Resistance	2003	225	\$16.00	\$12.95	Compelling vision of a secular, democratic Middle East.
Said, E.	Out of Place	1999	295	\$26.99	\$15.95	A memoir.
Shahak, I.	Jewish History, Jewish Religion	1994	127	\$17.95	\$15.00	The Talmud and the peace process.
Shlaim, A.	The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World	1999	448	\$17.95	\$14.95	Israeli historian reexamines official Israeli history.
Swisher, C.	The Truth About Camp David	2004	455	\$14.95	\$12.95	Untold story of collapse of the peace process.
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- Howard Film, **The Loss of Liberty** (2002, VHS, 53 minutes). Updated account of Israel's 1967 attack on the *USS Liberty*. **AMEU: \$20.00.**
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- Mennonite Central Committee, **Children of the Nakba** (2005, DVD). Why the issue of Palestinian refugees is integral to resolving the conflict. Comes with study guides. **AMEU: \$15.00.**
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