

The West Bank and Gaza: The Emerging Political Consensus

By Ann M. Lesch

Palestinian residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip articulate a clear consensus concerning their political aspirations. They demand the end to Israeli military occupation and they seek self-determination for the Palestinian people. They assert their right to form an independent state that would establish through negotiations its relationships with neighboring Israel and Jordan. These demands have been stated in numerous resolutions and petitions issued by the municipalities, professional societies and charitable groups on the West Bank and Gaza. For example, a group of prominent spokesmen who met in Jerusalem on October 1, 1978, declared:

No peace is possible in the area without the complete and genuine withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all the occupied territory and granting the Palestinian people the right of return, self-determination and the creation of their own independent state on the land of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.

This political position is fundamentally different from the bellicose propaganda cries of Ahmad Shuqayri, appointed by the Arab League to head the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1964. It also differs from the original P.L.O. credo that called for a democratic secular state in all the territory of

historical Palestine. This change in Palestinian thinking, carefully charted by the theoretician, Sabri Jiryis,¹ also lies at the heart of a statement by Yasir Arafat, the P.L.O. Executive Committee chairman: "I offered a democratic secular state, but they said we wanted to demolish and destroy Israel. We put it aside and said we will establish our independent state in any part of Palestine."²

Palestinian leaders recognize the need for an interim period—preferably under United Nations' supervision—before full independence is achieved. Not only would a transition reduce Palestinian and Israeli fears about each other's intentions, but it would minimize dislocations within the Palestinian community. Arafat told a United States Congressional delegation in 1978 that he would welcome the "protection" of U.N. forces for a prolonged period.³ And he later reiterated that "the only possible solution" is joint United States-Soviet guarantees for Israel and the Palestinian state.

The institutions necessary for a Palestinian state already exist in the form of the P.L.O. organs—the Executive Committee; Palestine National Council (the parliament in exile); educational bodies; the Red Crescent Society, its clinics and hospitals; S.A.M.E.D. industries; and affiliated women's, students' and workers' associations. All could be transformed into governing and administrative organs.

Within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are municipalities and village councils, and a complex network of charitable and professional societies that provide health, social welfare, educational and economic services. Moreover, Palestinian staff presently serve under the Israeli military administration and are responsible for assisting the residents in the fields of agriculture, social welfare, health and education. And the United Nations Relief and Works Agency has a substantial bureaucracy that provides services to the refugees. While some of the U.N.R.W.A. institutions would need to be retained to care for the 1948 refugees, many agency employees could contribute their administrative skills to the new state.

It is increasingly apparent that the Palestinians must represent their own interests in the negotiating process. No Arab state can speak authoritatively on their behalf. Only the P.L.O. can put the stamp of legitimacy on a diplomatic settlement and enable that settlement to be consolidated. Exclusion from the diplomatic process ensures that the Palestinian leadership will oppose the results of the negotiations and that the Palestinians will remain a destabilizing force in the region. Moreover, the Palestinians living in the territories occupied by Israel cannot—and do not want to—organize themselves to negotiate. They comprise only a third of all the Palestinians, and they feel

About This Issue

This issue, on West Bank and Gaza politics, draws upon the research of Dr. Ann Lesch. From 1974 to 1977 Ann served as Associate Middle East representative in Jerusalem for the American Friends Service Committee. To prepare this article, the author visited the occupied territories and spoke with civic leaders, who will be key figures in any negotiated settlement. A frequent lecturer and writer on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Ann is the author of *Arab Politics in Palestine 1917-1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement*, recently released by Cornell University Press.

Permission to reprint material selected by the author includes: *Palestine Human Rights Bulletin*, No. 12, for Mayor Khalaf's speech at the 1978 Convention of the United Holy Land Fund; *Newsweek*, July 9, 1979, for "A Palestinian View," by Mayor Milhem; *New Outlook*, April 1979, for excerpts from article by Ma'moun al-Sayyid; *The Jerusalem Post*, excerpts, August 30, 1979 and September 14, 1979; and *Yediot Ahronot*, excerpts, September 7, 1979.

that they have neither the authority nor the political strength to represent the Palestinians as a whole.

Objections To Camp David Accords

The reaction of Palestinians to the Camp David negotiations and the Egyptian-Israeli treaty must be set in the context of their publicly stated willingness to accept a state alongside Israel, their bitterness at being excluded from negotiations, and their deep suspicion of Israeli intentions in the West Bank and Gaza. They deeply fear the accords will perpetuate the occupation, rather than end it, and will even lead to the annexation of the West Bank and Gaza by Israel. This fear is based on statements by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, government actions such as the seizure of land for Israeli settlements, and their disbelief that the United States will ever exert effective pressure on the Israeli regime.

Photos are courtesy of Ann Lesch.

Also included in this issue is a report that appeared in *The Middle East* (November 1979), in which senior editor Judith Perera reviews the latest developments in Palestinian diplomacy and speculates on the prospects of a formal government-in-exile.

Our issue also considers the recent background report published by the American Jewish Committee on "Anti-Israel Influence in American Churches." Rev. L. Humphrey Walz, who reviewed the report, is former editor of *The Link* and member of A.M.E.U.'s Board of Directors.

The January/February issue of *The Link* will look at the 1980 elections and, specifically, at the Middle East foreign policy positions of the leading Presidential candidates.

We at A.M.E.U. express to all our readers our gratitude for your support throughout the year and extend to you our best wishes for a joyous holiday season.

John F. Mahoney,
Executive Director

The agreement reached by Egypt and Israel removed Egypt from the battlefield and eliminated the most significant Arab pressure on Israel. Although the "framework" gave lip-service to Palestinian self-rule, residents feared that the self-governing authority would never be able to transform itself into a real government. Moreover, the framework gave Jordan a strong rule, opposed by many Palestinians, and made no provision for the two-thirds of the Palestinians who lived outside the occupied territories. The declaration issued by the hundred leading politicians on October 1, 1978, condemned autonomy as "legitimation of the occupation, the continuation of oppression of the (Palestinian) people and the stealing of their legitimate rights, and an open plot to curb the hopes of our people to have our right to our land and our self-determination."

The Israeli interpretation of autonomy dismayed the Palestinians. An editorial in *Al-Fajar*, on September 26,

1978, listed Begin's "rigid" conditions:

No to the independent Palestinian state

No to the Palestinian Liberation Organization

No to stopping Israeli settlements on the West Bank beyond three months

No to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied Arab lands

No to Arab sovereignty on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

No to Arab sovereignty in Arab Jerusalem

No to a referendum of the Palestinian people.

A former Jordanian minister, Anwar Nusseibeh, commented to me that Camp David gave the "semblance of peace, but not real peace. After all," he said, "the West Bank and Gaza are only the 'rump' of Palestine, and yet we are denied even that rump." In other conversations in late September 1978, people stressed the fatal flaws in the agreement: It split the Palestinian people and instituted an autonomy that seemed really a disguised occupation.

Necessary Conditions for a Transition Period

Palestinian politicians are hopeful that criticism of autonomy will not be interpreted as opposition to negotiations of any sort or to a genuine peace settlement. Karim Khalaf, mayor of Ramallah, declaimed: "We say 'yes', 'yes' to a Palestinian state and 'yes' to a just peace."⁴ And Mayor Rashad Shawwa of Gaza commented: "I would appeal to the people of Israel to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, accept the idea of self-determination for the Palestinian people and their right to erect their own sovereign state. If this is done, if the problem of the land is left to the autonomy, if settlement is stopped and existing ones are dismantled, there are good chances of coexistence."⁵

Still, many residents grasp at straws. When former Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan said in February 1979 that Israel could not ignore the P.L.O. and must settle the refugee problem, some Palestinians saw a glimmer of hope. The Mayor of Bethlehem called Dayan's remarks a step in the right direction and a newspaper editor added that, if Israel recognized the P.L.O., there would be a chance for a peaceful solution and for the two nations to live together in peace.⁶ But Dayan

West Bank Declaration

To emphasize the continued position of our people in the occupied territory, we would like to declare that the results of Camp David crown Sadat's defeatist method which aimed at destroying our Palestinian Arab people's victories. Our people have achieved these gains during their struggle and by their bitter sacrifices. These gains were recognized by the Arab states at the Algiers and



Waiting, Muhammad Hamoudah

Rabat summit conferences, and were recognized internationally at the General Assembly of the United Nations. Sadat's method also aimed at dividing the Arab liberation movement and aborting the Palestinian national movement. Moreover, it sought to push those forces away from their strategic allies in the international liberation

movement, in order to return to the policy of colonialist allies that our people had refused in the past. This policy will heat up to the crisis point in the region and will bring back the Cold War era.

The autonomy plan for the West Bank and Gaza, which was a main article in the Camp David accord, is only a way to legalize the continued occupation of our land. We consider it a clear conspiracy to thwart our people's aspirations and their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Our people have warned more than once against this defeatist method which will lead to a partial peace treaty and will liquidate the Palestine problem. This result will, of course, be in the interest of our enemies.

Our Palestinian people in the occupied territories are aware of these facts and, because of their commitment to their historical responsibility, want to emphasize the following:

1. Our Palestinian Arab people inside and outside the occupied territories are one unity sharing one struggle and one history.

2. Our people emphasize that their only representative is the Palestine Liberation Organization and we refuse

any trusteeship or any alternative.

3. The autonomy plan is rejected as a whole and in its details, because it only legitimizes the occupation and the continuation of the oppression of our people and the robbing of their legitimate rights.

4. We aspire to establish a just and lasting peace in the region, which can only be on the basis of our people's exercising their right to self-determination and national independence, after the complete withdrawal from all the territories and the establishment of the independent Palestinian state.

5. The return of Palestinian Arab sovereignty over the city of Jerusalem as an inseparable part of the West Bank is an historical and spiritual right which cannot be renounced.

Signed by about sixty people, including: the mayors of Ramallah, el-Bireh, Nablus, Jenin, Halhul, Beitunya, Arrabe, Silwad, Bir Zeit, Dura and Ya'bed; the deputy mayors of Ramallah, el-Bireh, Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beitunya; twenty other members of municipal councils; a Muslim Supreme Court judge; the President of the West Bank Chambers of Commerce; and representatives of nine charitable societies and unions.

Unpublished petition, distributed in Arabic, June 1979.

"clarified" his comment the next day: He said that he did not mean that Israel should negotiate with the P.L.O., but that one could not ignore the P.L.O.'s position in the conflict, its influence on Jordan and Saudi Arabia, and the fact that it causes difficulties for Sadat. West Bankers were disappointed, but some still tried to find hints of a policy change in his statement. One editorial remarked that Dayan was not a political novice, given to slips of the tongue, and that this might be the beginning of a realistic trend in Israeli policy, forced on it by events in the Middle East.⁷

Similarly, when opposition leader Shimon Peres spoke in the Knesset about Palestinian national rights, two Arabic newspapers immediately noted that his speech contained positive elements. *Al-Quds*, in particular, com-

mented that although Peres rejected the idea of an independent Palestinian state and a return to the 1967 borders, his "remarks contained more than one new and important position What was implied in his speech is that it is impossible to ignore the Palestinians' right to set up a homeland."⁸

In conversation, members of municipal councils and other civic leaders say that they realize that an interim period is required before they can gain independence alongside Israel. Some list conditions that must be met before the negotiations can be taken seriously, such as a freeze on settlements during the interim period; an Israeli commitment to eventual withdrawal of its armed forces; a statement of the Palestinians' rights to self-determination; efforts to reach an equitable accord on Jerusalem; and provision for gradually

implementing the refugees' right of return. Fahd Qawasmeh, the mayor of Hebron, stated: "If Israel says this is the land of the Palestinians, then we can discuss security, future relations between us, how to arrive at peace, a hundred items. But the aim of the negotiations must be clear from the start."⁹ He subsequently added that he and the other mayors would persuade the P.L.O. to join the negotiations if Israel would state that it would evacuate settlements, withdraw from all the territories, grant the right of self-determination to the Palestinians, and return Jerusalem to its pre-June War status.¹⁰ The mayors of Gaza and Bethlehem made similar statements, arguing that if they could gain these pre-conditions, they would try to persuade the P.L.O. to support negotiations.¹¹

It is possible to extract from discus-

sions with Palestinians, as well as from their statements for the public record, the minimum conditions needed for a transition regime to win acceptance. Meeting these conditions during the negotiations—or during the interim period itself—would ensure that the regime would not be a step toward annexation by Israel, but rather a step toward independence alongside Israel.

The ruling council on the West Bank and Gaza would require secure finan-

cial resources, including the power to levy direct and indirect taxes, and to receive loans and grants from abroad. The council would have authority over the administrative departments (social welfare, education, health, agriculture, industry and commerce, tourism, customs, postal service, police) and would have clearly delineated responsibilities vis-a-vis the municipalities and village councils. The council would administer the land registry department

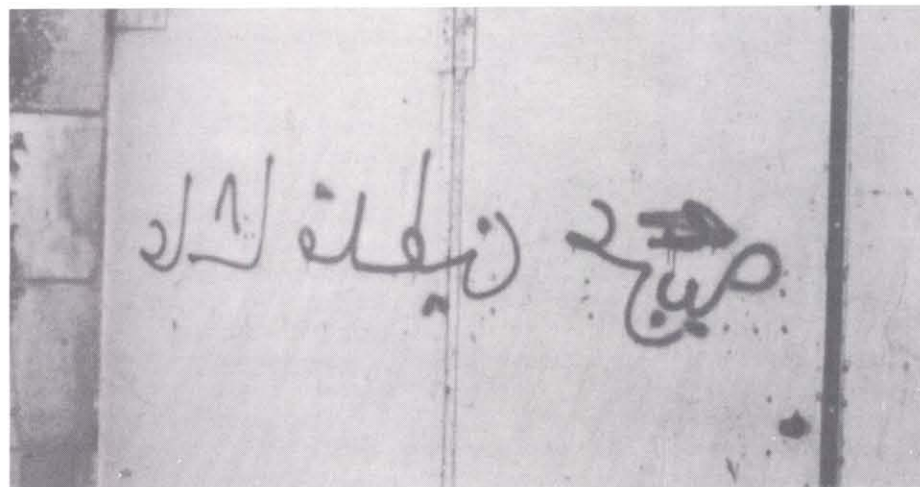
and public land, as well as property that Israel designated as “absentee” land because its owners were abroad in 1967. The council would also regulate the use of water and mineral resources. Since Israeli settlements are located on public, absentee and private lands and tap local water sources, the council would be able to prevent any increase in the number or size of the settlements and, ultimately, could negotiate their removal. (If any Israelis seek to live in

An Address By Karim Khalaf, Mayor of Ramallah

One of the most elementary of human rights denied to Palestinians is the right of self-determination. The right of self-determination without external interference, and the right to national independence and sovereignty, are the most basic elements of human rights. Recognition of the fact that the people of Palestine are entitled to these rights is indispensable to the establishment of a just and lasting peace History has shown that patched-up solutions sooner or later result in eruptions. Dissecting Palestine into Israel, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of Jordan in 1948 gave the international community the feeling that the problem had been solved. Time has proved that the so-called solution was only temporary. Since the early fifties, a continuous war of attrition has been going on, punctuated by three wars and resulting in a great loss of life and the expenditure of exorbitant amounts of money. Furthermore, the spectre of a world war was never far away.

The pre-requisites for a solution are:

1. Recognition by the United States and Israel . . . that no one can speak for the Palestinians other than the Palestinians; that the P.L.O. is the sole representative of the Palestinians; and that, as stated in Article 15 of the Palestine National Council resolution of 20 March 1977, the P.L.O.: “Is to participate independently and equally in all international conferences and efforts dealing with the Palestine cause and with the Arab-Zionist conflict in order to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people as mentioned in U.N. General Assembly Resolution 3236



Graffiti on gate in Jerusalem: Arab Palestine Lives in 1974.”

2. The willingness of the big powers to take immediate concrete action for the implementation of the U.N.

Resolution of 22 November 1974 which reaffirms the inalienable rights of the Palestinians in Palestine, their repatriation and the restitution of their property. The sort of concrete action I am talking of will require as courageous a stand as that taken by the late President Eisenhower during the Suez aggression.

3. Effective United Nations’ intervention in the implementation of its resolution by coercive action, if necessary. So far the Security Council has not tried to coerce Israel into the implementation of U.N. resolutions because of the United States’ use of its power to veto in favor of Israel.

4. If the United States goes on with its discriminatory policy against the Palestinians in the United Nations, thus hampering United Nations’ action for

resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United Nations must resort to economic, diplomatic and military measures against Israel.

If peace is to be achieved, the pre-requisites are:

1. Acknowledgement by the United States and the big powers of the P.L.O. as the sole representative of the Palestinians.

2. Israeli unconditional withdrawal from the occupied territories.

3. The establishment of an independent sovereign Palestinian state without external interference.

4. Securing the rights of the displaced Palestinians in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

Excerpts from Karim Khalaf’s presentation at the Annual Convention of the United Holy Land Fund, Chicago, September 1978, reprinted in Palestine Human Rights Bulletin, No. 12.

Muhammad Hasan Milhem: Mayor of Halhul

If there is a single people in the Middle East more anxious than any other to seek peace, it is the Palestinian people. We have suffered enormously during the last 60 years — 30 years of British occupation, followed by 30 years of fragmentation, exile and Israeli occupation.

In recent years, an international consensus has taken shape regarding the nature of a just and lasting Middle East peace. This consensus, which we Palestinians find to be an acceptable basis for a just and lasting peace, calls for a comprehensive settlement that includes the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, including their right to political independence in a national state on their native soil.

A settlement that is not comprehensive and omits Palestinian self-determination will produce a temporary truce, not a state of peace.

Palestinian Reasons For Rejecting Accords

Camp David provoked Palestinian rejection for several reasons:

1. It spoke of "the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" instead of the Palestinian people, thus ignoring the majority of our people who have suffered the most, and asking us, the minority, to represent the whole. While we live under occupation, we at least live in our homeland. Our brothers and sisters are the victims of forced exile.

We cannot forget them or act without them.

2. Camp David accepted the principles that the other peoples concerned are free to designate their spokesmen and representatives, but denied the right to the Palestinians. The Palestinian Liberation Organization is accepted by the Palestinian people and by the overwhelming majority of the nations of the world as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Camp David requires the Palestinians to seek a substitute leadership as a condition of participation.

3. The agreements envision only "autonomy" for the inhabitants of one-fifth of Palestine. Autonomy is less than independence, and an autonomous region is a part of a larger state. The agreements, therefore, rule out the possibility of independence. We see no reason why we should negotiate a settlement that prohibits the option of independence for the Palestinian people. We have no interest in legitimizing Israeli occupation by consenting to a thinly camouflaged version of it.

4. Jerusalem, the heart of Palestinian history and heritage, was not mentioned. Jerusalem is also the geographic link between the northern and southern halves of the West Bank. We are neither willing nor able to envision the future without it.

5. The agreements did not require an internationally supervised cessation to Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, thus betraying a lack of good

faith and a cruel disregard for the future of our people. A halt to the settlement is a *sine qua non* of the confidence-building process that is alleged to be the principal achievement and merit of the ongoing diplomacy.

6. The agreements represent a regression from earlier international commitments to the Palestinian refugees. They make no mention of their internationally recognized right to choose repatriation or compensation. Before Camp David, there were agreed-upon solutions needing implementation. Now there is simply a "problem" that will someday be considered, without principles agreed upon in advance upon which negotiations can be based.

The Palestinian people are aware of the complexity of the issues. They certainly do not expect that the accumulated injustices will vanish overnight, and they do not daydream of easy and sudden freedom. But they are equally aware of the sterility of negotiating a settlement that in advance rules out the essence of their national identity, rights and aspirations.

The Palestinian people would be prepared to discuss how and when they are to achieve independence in their homeland. But they are not prepared, and no one has the right to expect them to be, to discuss the modalities of denying them their freedom.

*From "A Palestinian View,"
Newsweek, July 9, 1979, p. 24.*

the West Bank or Gaza without claiming extraterritorial status, special arrangements could be negotiated.)

The passage of people and goods between the West Bank and Gaza Strip (presumably on a specified road across Israel) and across the Jordan bridges would be guaranteed in the negotiations. The council would be able to develop Gaza as an international transit port, and would use the Kalandia airport, north of Jerusalem. The special security measures required at border checkpoints would be detailed in the negotiations.

The right of refugees from the wars of 1948 and 1967 to move to the West Bank and Gaza would need to be established during the negotiations, although their return would have to be phased carefully as part of a comprehensive program of economic development. Identity cards would be provided for returning refugees as well as for current residents, but the issue of providing Palestinian passports for those Palestinians who would remain abroad could probably be deferred until a later stage in the negotiations.

If the Israeli armed forces were

limited to specific points along the Jordan River and to observation posts on the central mountain ridge, and if internal security were in the hands of the Palestinian police force, then the Palestinians could tolerate an Israeli presence during the transition phase. Israeli patrols would not be allowed to roam the city streets, enter houses at will, and arrest residents. The military court system would be dismantled, and the Palestinian council would control courts and prisons. Palestinians would welcome the presence of United Nations or other neutral forces in the West

Why we reject autonomy

By Ma'moun al-Sayyid,
Editor of *Al-Fajr*

Why do you reject autonomy?

Autonomy represents a sort of administrative independence for the Palestinians, on the assumption that they constitute a homogeneous minority, distinct from the Israeli majority which possesses absolute sovereignty over the whole land of Israel.

In this sense, what autonomy means is precisely the nullification of the Palestinians' ownership of the land they inhabit, on the one hand, and the termination of their historical and national links with that land, on the other. In other words, they are enabled to conduct their daily life and affairs in peace on a land that is not theirs (as though) they are merely guests in this hotel, which is owned by Menachem Begin.... (The Palestinians) are never to contemplate their right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent state.

We have to keep in mind the extent to which the Palestinians value their special identity, and the ferociousness with which they have fought to preserve that identity, as well as the huge sacrifice made.

Why don't you view autonomy as a first step on the road to peace?

The argument behind this question is that we Palestinians overstate our rejection of autonomy, and that we would be better off participating in the peace process and giving it a chance to take its natural course. After all, it is argued, this is only a first step and there are

more to come To this line of argument our reply is as follows:

1. We are being asked to participate in a process which makes it a prior condition that we surrender all our rights as a people with a natural and legitimate right to self-determination. There is a minimum beyond which no people can go and which no people can surrender — and that is the right of self-determination. Moreover, the phrase, "participation in deciding its future" is both deceitful and unjust — for how can our people accept mere "participation," while Israel possesses the right of veto against everything it considers unacceptable?

2. If Begin . . . will not last forever, neither will Carter and Sadat. Why, then, should the Palestinian people agree to take part in a doubtful gamble on the strength of obscure and confusing American promises?

3. Who says that Sadat will take the side of the Palestinians? . . . Now that he has filled his pockets with Sinai, he will have no objection to making concession after concession, since it will be the Palestinians who are going to pay the price.

4. The same can be said about the American President who is asking us to abdicate our identity and surrender our right to self-determination — and then to enter the dark cave of autonomy in the hope that the United States will, one of these days, fulfill its promise of providing us with more dollars and more sacks of flour so that we gain more physical strength in order to build more Israeli settlements on our land.

5. We are confident . . . that Menachem Begin will never withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, even if he has to confront the whole

world.

6. Bitter and cruel experience under Israeli occupation has taught us that the Israeli "security argument" is used to justify any measures and conduct, no matter how . . . objectionable or unacceptable they might appear in the eyes of others. As long as this argument will remain predominant in Israeli practices throughout the period of the proposed autonomy — starting with the redeployment of forces and ending with the domination of water resources in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — what relevance is there to speaking about "a first step on the path to peace"?

What is the Palestinian alternative?

Talk about the Palestinian alternative requires us first to define what is being proposed or presented to the Palestinians, to which they have to find an alternative. What is being proposed is for the Palestinians to enter the dark cave of autonomy, where we will find the American-Israeli-Egyptian alliance, where we will find ourselves between the Israel hammer and the Egyptian anvil, while the American President stands and calculates the blows received by the Palestinians in preparation for the moment of final breakdown.

The Arab alternative, presented at Baghdad in November 1978, stipulates complete Israeli withdrawal from Arab territories occupied in 1967 and recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to establishment of an independent state of its own.

Excerpt from New Outlook, April 1979.

Bank and Gaza to protect the legitimate security needs of both the Israelis and Palestinians.

The issue of Jerusalem would be central to the negotiations. Aside from its importance as a religious center to Muslims, Christians and Jews, East Jerusalem serves as the commercial, educational and political headquarters of the Arab chambers of commerce,

trade unions, and professional and charitable societies. Jerusalem has the greatest concentration of hotels, tourist agencies, shops, insurance companies and banks, and serves as the central market for fresh produce and meat. The supreme court (closed in 1967) is located there, along with the pre-1967 offices of the governorate and municipality. At a minimum, its 105,000 Arab

residents need the right to vote for and participate in the governing council of an interim regime. But in order to assure the long-term viability of an accord, East Jerusalem would need to become the capital of the Palestinian state. The city would remain open physically, but would be administered by separate Israeli and Arab municipalities, with a joint coor-

dinating committee for certain services.

In order to ensure the fair implementation of the interim plan, the negotiations would have to specify clear timetables and penalties for noncompliance. Supervision of the elections by neutral parties would also be desirable.

It is evident that these conditions cannot all be met before an interim regime is established. Indeed, many of them will have to be worked out through the process of negotiations. But Palestinian mistrust of American and Israeli intentions is so intense that more than "verbal clarifications"¹² will be required. Linkage of implementation of the Israel-Egypt treaty to an agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and inclusion of the P.L.O. in the negotiations would be tangible steps. Similarly, a freeze on Israeli settlements, a commitment to place government lands under the authority of the Palestinian council, and a timetable for withdrawing Israeli military rule would be practical measures that would indicate the ultimate outcome of the transition period. Most of all, the concept of reciprocity and mutual respect needs to be introduced into Israeli-Palestinian relations. These concepts, at the heart of the Israel-Egypt accord, have been denied to the Palestinians.

Excerpt from monograph to be published by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy.

NOTES

1. Sabri Jiryis, "On Political Settlement in the Middle East: The Palestinian Dimension," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, No. 25, Autumn 1977, pp. 3-25.

2. Transcript, "Face the Nation," CBS-TV, December 3, 1978.

3. Unpublished transcript of Arafat's discussion with Congressman Paul Findley and others, Damascus, January 5, 1978.

4. Quoted in *The Jerusalem Post*, October 17, 1978.

5. Quoted in *Israel and Palestine*, Paris, April/May 1979, p. 111.

6. Israel radio broadcasts, February 13 and 14, 1979; the latter quoted Mahmud Ya'ish, editor of *al-Sha'b* newspaper.

7. *Yediot Ahronot* and *al-Quds*, February 14, 1979.

8. *Al-Hamishmar*, March 14, 1979, quoted an editorial in *al-Quds*.

9. *The Christian Science Monitor*, March 29, 1979.

10. Israel radio broadcast, May 7, 1979.

11. Israel radio broadcast, October 28, 1978; *Financial Times*, November 30, 1978.

12. Muhammad Hasan Milhem, mayor of Halhul, *Wall Street Journal*, October 12, 1978.

Petition from Jerusalem

Mr. President Carter:

As leaders of institutions and communities within Palestinian Jerusalem we wish to inform you that we are expecting you to support the return of Arab sovereignty to the 105,000 residents of Arab Jerusalem, within the context of a Palestinian state. We believe that Arab control of our part of the City can be achieved as part of a physically united Jerusalem with open access to people of all faiths. You should know that the Palestinian citizens of Jerusalem do not accept continued Israeli control of our lives and our destiny. There can be no peace in the

Middle East without the return of Arab sovereignty over Palestinian Jerusalem.

We appreciate the public position of the United States regarding the non-recognition of Israel's annexation of Arab Jerusalem. We hope you will be able to translate this policy into reality very soon.

We wish to assure you that the Palestinians everywhere aspire for peace and justice for the peoples of the Middle East.

Delivered by a Jerusalem mukhtar to United States special envoy Robert Strauss, August 1979.

The Uprising, Suleiman Mansour



Critique of the negotiations

By Anwar Nusseibeh,
Former Jordanian Defense Minister

*Excerpt from The Jerusalem Post,
September 14, 1979.*

One of the most prominent former Hashemite officials living under Israeli rule, Anwar Nusseibeh of East Jerusalem, does not believe that either Jordan or the Palestine Liberation Organization has "any incentive" at present to put forward new initiatives concerning the future of the West Bank.

He did not think that any new Jordanian initiative, either with or without the agreement of the P.L.O., could bypass United States efforts to implement the Camp David autonomy scheme, which has been rejected out of hand both by King Hussein and Yasir Arafat.

"How could it? America, Israel and Egypt are proceeding on a basis which is unacceptable outside these three parties. So how can anybody else get themselves involved?" he asked rhetorically.

He saw "no significance at all" in the fact that United States special envoy Robert Strauss had chosen to meet with Hikmat al-Masri of Nablus, a former speaker of the Jordanian parliament, and Elias Freij, the mayor of Bethlehem,

Israeli soldiers guard a large group of Arab detainees in occupied territories.



both of whom maintain close ties with Amman.

These meetings, Nusseibeh opined, "do not denote any kind of departure from Camp David or the autonomy talks."

Nusseibeh said that relations between Jordan and the P.L.O. were "normal—in the good sense," conceding that this has not always been so. "They have had their differences, but that was an aberration in my opinion," he said.

West Bankers, he believed, had never had "different loyalties, but different points of view." The loyalty was one—"to the cause of the people of Palestine. There are different interpretations of how best to serve that cause."

*Excerpt from interview in Yediot
Ahrnot, September 7, 1979, regarding
the Autonomy Plan.*

It is obvious that if the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories refuse to hear about the autonomy plan it is not because they are afraid of the P.L.O., but because this plan includes no real element that will solve the basic problem: the right to self-determination for the Palestinians.



Anwar Nusseibeh

The autonomy plan seems to me bad from all points of view:

1. The functional level — I think it tends to freeze the process of giving self-determination to the Palestinians for many years to come.

2. The plan isn't good on the social and political level... Are we children? Are we politically cripples? Why does Israel think that we are unable to manage our life on our own on all levels and that we need a guardian?.

I think that all the parties involved in the conflict should participate in talks in whatever framework. This means the P.L.O., Egypt and even Syria. And we mustn't forget that the Soviet Union is also very interested in the peace process in the Middle East, and there is no need to say that the same goes for the Americans.

I think (Israel) should be the first to recognize (the P.L.O.) because you are the strong ones and have all the cards in your hands. If you will sit together with the P.L.O. for negotiations, this will automatically create mutuality, which will mean that the P.L.O. recognizes Israel's right to exist. As for the paragraphs (in the P.L.O. Covenant): Any process of peacemaking has its dynamic and I very much hope that it will have a real expression in the attitude of the P.L.O. towards Israel. Once and for all you must eliminate this complex of fear of the Palestinian state... I really believe that you could live peacefully with them in mutual cooperation, side by side.

Fundamental powers of a regime

By Ibrahim Matar

The minimal requirements that will give the new government on the West Bank and Gaza integrity and public support are:

1. The governing authority should have title to all the public domain lands in the territories under its jurisdiction — East Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza Strip. This authority includes the power to determine the development and allocation of all land and water rights within the territory and the power to negotiate such where other states are involved.

2. The governing authority should guarantee the private property rights of its citizens and be empowered to dismantle the illegal (Israeli) colonies established since 1967. The authority should restore to Palestinian farmers lands expropriated or closed off for the exclusive use of the colonizers or their presumed security needs.

3. The governing authority should control the movement of people and goods with neighboring states. United Nations troops have served as peacekeepers in the Middle East and can continue to meet the legitimate security

Ma'ale Ephraim settlement, Jordan Valley

concerns of the parties involved.

4. The governing authority will supervise the return of displaced persons, the relocation of these people on their lands, and provide for rehabilitation in terms of jobs, education, and welfare needs.

5. The governing authority should be empowered to raise revenues through taxes and duties; borrow and administer funds for the development of the people and the economy. Israeli taxes will no longer be operable in these territories.

6. The governing authority should plan the restoration, development, and where appropriate, administer the economy in at least the following areas:

(a) Organize and administer a monetary system appropriate to a self-governing entity.

(b) Reopen the commercial banks closed in 1967 and issue licenses for other banks who wish to operate in these territories.

(c) Establish specialized financial institutions including a development board necessary for long-range planning and an expanding economy.

(d) Stimulate and control agricultural and industrial commodity imports and

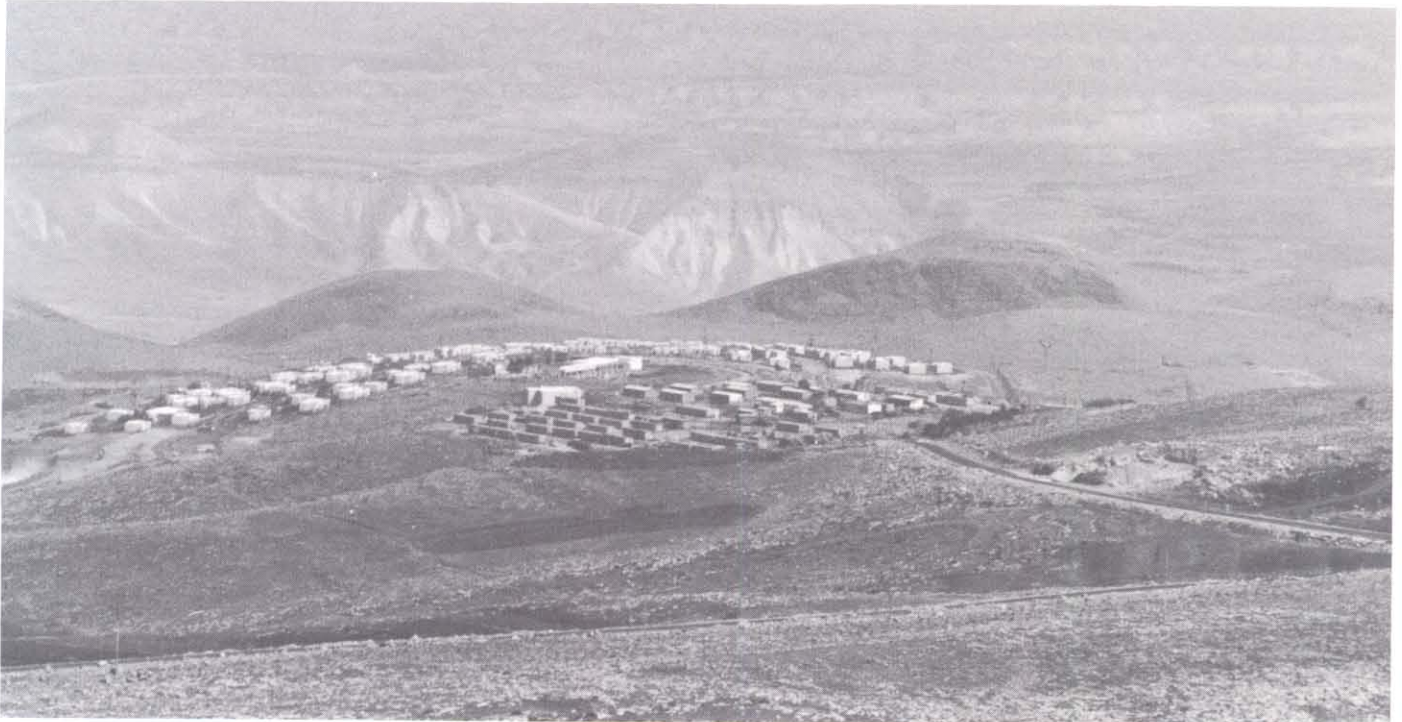
exports with protection for the producers of these territories.

(e) Reopen and develop the Gaza port and the East Jerusalem airport as a means of restoring and developing the international trade and travel potential of West Bank and Gaza Strip.

(f) Improve and expand the public transportation system, including a road corridor for travel and transport of goods between West Bank and Gaza.

Other Palestinians would doubtlessly add other essentials or restate these priorities. What I want to emphasize is that a self-governing authority — credible, legitimate, and supported by Palestinians — requires the power and capability, to structure a viable and attractive economic community, to provide freedom to live in peace and security, and to overcome the suffering and injustice that has resulted from eleven years of military occupation. These aims can be achieved only if the self-governing authority has full control of the major natural resources — land and water — of the West Bank and Gaza.

Excerpted statement by Ibrahim Matar of the Mennonite Central Committee, Jerusalem, February 1979.



Labor and manpower prospects

By Ghassan Harb,

Department of Economics,
Birzeit University

The starting point of this paper will be the author's belief in the inevitability of an independent Palestinian state in the territories occupied during the June 1967 war: the West Bank, including Arab Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Such a state . . . will not only provide a secure path for future economic development for the Palestinians, but will also fulfill the legitimate political aspirations of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination.

In a country which is moderately endowed with natural resources and which lacks the considerable capital needed for the process of development, the labor force acquires relative importance in substituting for the shortages in other factors of production. As the economists Dr. Haim Darin-Drabkin (an Israeli) and Dr. Elias Tuma (a Palestinian) stress in their study, *The Economic Case for Palestine*, "the human resources that make the Palestinian people must play the most important role in achieving viability."

This idea finds its supporters in the highest ranks of Palestinian leadership, both in the occupied territories and outside them. Mr. Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), a prominent figure in the P.L.O., in an interview with Eric Rouleau . . . stressed the necessity of "creating a state in the freed territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip," emphasizing that "the Palestinians have an abundance of manpower, plenty of technicians and executives who have done university studies, and they can above all count on considerable financial help from oil-producing states. In any case, we are much more 'viable' than the State of Israel itself." (*Jerusalem Post*, January 12, 1979).

The classification of the labor force in the occupied territories in 1978 (which totals only 205,800 out of a population of 1,122,600) shows that the highest category of labor, which includes scientists, academics, professionals, technicians and related workers, administrators, managers and clerical staff, comprises 11.39 percent of the

labor force; skilled workers in industry, mining, building, transport and other trades comprise 23.8 percent; merchants and their staff 10.9 percent; service workers 7.15 percent; agricultural workers 26.06 percent; and unskilled workers in industry, transport, and building comprise 20.7 percent The educational structure of the labor force shows that in 1976 approximately 38 percent had received intermediate and higher education.

Return of Refugees Would Alter Labor Force

One of the fruits of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement will be the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland. This will drastically change the composition of the population and labor force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip Dr. Haim Darin-Drabkin expects that 1.2 million refugees will return during the first five years of the settlement. He estimates the resulting population to be 2,374,000, with 546,000 job-seekers (23 percent of the total population). Dr. Drabkin suggests the following employment structure by economic sectors: in agriculture 99,000; in industry 81,000; in construction 100,000, and in services 267,000.

The only detailed analysis of labor demand is contained in the study of housing problems by Dr. Bakr Abu Kishk, for the Association of Engineers. He argues that growth in the West Bank construction sector would absorb most of the 18,290 workers now employed on construction projects inside Israel and would generate jobs in ancillary industries. The establishment of import-substituting industries would further expand total demand for labor. Moreover, the return of refugees would substantially increase employment in infrastructure works, housing and vital public services. (He concludes:)

1. In both quantitative and qualitative aspects, the labor force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, together with that of Palestinians in exile, is capable of matching the requirements of development in the future state.

2. Equilibrium (or a point near to it) between the supply of labor and de-

mand for it may be reached.

3. The future improvement of the quality of labor and the increase in its efficiency are of vital importance for the country. The development of a series of educational and vocational institutions geared to the actual needs of the country will contribute effectively to this end.

4. Rational utilization of the labor force may be achieved through effective economic planning.



Estranged Oranges, Ismail Ashour

5. Since the local resources of capital accumulation are not sufficient to provide the badly needed investment, foreign aid and loans will play a considerable role in the future state, especially in the first stages of its independent existence. The international community, Arab states and friendly countries throughout the world will be urged to contribute to such a goal.

6. This investment will provide a solid base for the creative activities of the Palestinians, and for the transformation of this land of suffering and instability into a flourishing oasis of security.

Excerpts from an article to be published by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy.

Dayan's meeting in Gaza

Former Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan met in Gaza with Dr. Haider Abdul Shafi, President of the Red Crescent Society, on April 29, 1979.

In an interview with *The Jerusalem Post*, Shafi described the talks with Dayan as "academic and theoretical," although he admitted that the concrete subjects of peace, normalization, and Gaza's relations to these matters came up during the lengthy talks. "Dayan is

fond of exploring," said Shafi, "even in a situation where there is no point to explore."

As part of the "academic discussion," Shafi said he was asked his opinion of a Palestinian state. "Gaza would want to be part of an independent state, along with the West Bank," he said, adding that it would not be linked, at least initially, with Jordan.

According to the *Gazan*, Dayan asked if such a state would want to have open

borders with Israel. "I told him that it would, once an agreement was reached with the P.L.O. Open borders would be essential to the region," added Shafi.

Shafi said he does not think Gaza notables would participate in the autonomy plan because the Camp David accords don't recognize their right to self-determination.

Excerpt from The Jerusalem Post, August 30.

Palestinian Diplomacy Pays Off

When the Palestinians set up their state they will be able to field some of the most experienced and able diplomats in the Arab world. During the past decade Palestinian officials have learnt to steer the resistance movement more or less safely through the turbulent waters of inter-Arab politics, at the same time using Arab support to further their cause internationally.

Winning Third World and East European sympathy was not too difficult a task and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) is now recognised by 105 countries—more than recognise Israel. Attention was then turned to Western Europe, the United States and even Israeli opposition forces.

In the past few months the Palestinian diplomatic offensive has been intensified in an attempt to counter and undermine the already very sick Egyptian-Israeli talks on Palestinian "autonomy". PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat has visited Austria, at the invitation of the Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt, and Spain, for talks with ministers. PLO Political Department Head Farouq Qaddoumi (Abu-Lutf) has had talks with French leaders and has appeared on West German televi-

sion, and an unofficial but high-level conference on Palestine has been held in Rome.

Arafat has also addressed the Non-Aligned Conference in Cuba and was expected to address the UN General Assembly—both important forums for publicising the Palestinian cause but even more important for the behind-the-scenes diplomacy which such gatherings make possible.

Diplomacy has been less successful, however, with the US, which is prevented from changing its Middle East policy drastically by a commitment not to recognise the PLO until the Palestinians recognise Israel and by the political and economic power of the Jewish lobby in Washington.

Nevertheless, some advances have been made, for there are now a number of Middle East experts within the Administration and outside it who favour a dialogue with the PLO and would support the setting up of a Palestinian state on the West Bank.

These include former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, his assistant Joseph Sisco and to a lesser extent President Carter's National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Kissinger is reportedly working hard to arrange

mutual Israeli-PLO recognition and Sisco is said to have had talks with Arafat. The Palestinians have also rallied the black American community to their cause, which will help to balance the influence of the Jewish lobby.

Attempts at the end of 1976 to open a PLO office in Washington and start a dialogue with the American Jewish community came to nothing, although some meetings were held.

During this same period Palestinian officials were holding talks in Paris with Israeli non-Zionist and anti-Zionist leaders, and these contacts were followed up in October 1977 during a conference on Palestine held in London. But the PLO never officially acknowledged any of these meetings. The Rome seminar last September was the first public meeting of Palestinians and Israelis, and involved PLO Executive Committee member Ahmad Sidqi Dajani.

This was perhaps the best indication of how things had changed in two years.

The PLO's diplomatic successes have been accompanied by a gradual but fundamental change in policy, and the new Palestinian aims were expressed unequivocally by Dajani in Rome: "The

final objective of the Palestinians is no longer the establishment of a democratic, secular state in Palestine but an independent state in the territories occupied in 1967," He welcomed any talks with non-Zionist Israelis and praised former World Jewish Congress leader Nahum Goldmann, who has long advocated Palestinian-Israeli coexistence.

Indications that this was the way Palestinian strategy was going came long ago. The 10-point political programme of the PLO adopted by the Palestine National Council (PNC) in 1974 stated that the PLO would establish an "independent national authority" on "every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated", a considerable modification of the PLO Charter, which seeks the liberation of all Palestine.

Last August, Arafat, addressing an American black delegation in Lebanon, stated publicly for the first time that the PLO would accept either one of two solutions—a democratic secular state in all Palestine, or an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

All this—the adoption of an internationally acceptable aim and the pursuit of international recognition—leads inevitably to the conclusion that some new peace move is afoot which will involve the PLO.

A further hint may perhaps lie in a little-noticed report by the Phalangist radio in Lebanon that Arafat had been negotiating with President Sarkis for the establishment of a Palestinian government-in-exile. If Sarkis agreed, the report claimed, the PLO would undertake to stop guerrilla groups from launching operations against Israel from South Lebanon, to apply the defunct Cairo Agreements strictly, to confine its activities to information and political work and to transfer the Government to Palestine once a state was set up. It is significant that the PLO has not denied this report.

The refusal of the Palestinians to appoint a government-in-exile has long been seen by many observers as a stumbling block to their inclusion in Middle East peace negotiations, and it would seem to be a logical step if the PLO is envisaging taking part in some new initiative.

It would also make it easier for the US to give some sort of recognition, since its pledge to Israel involved only the PLO, not a Palestinian government.

There are several indications that the US might welcome such a development

as a way out of the impasse it is facing. Its stern warnings to Israel about attacks on Lebanon and about settlements in the West Bank suggest that, given the narrow limits within which it can manoeuvre, it is trying to clear the way either for the inclusion of the Palestinians in the autonomy talks or for a European-sponsored move through the UN which would bypass the Camp David framework for a general settlement but would keep the Egyptian-Israeli agreement intact. Informed sources told *The Middle East* that the US had unofficially supported the Socialist International and Spanish initiatives to open a dialogue with Arafat.

There is no doubt that the development of Palestinian strategy has been largely conditioned by regional and international developments as much as by inter-Palestinian politics. Four distinct periods can be identified since 1948, and in each Palestinian policy was adapted to best exploit the factors which could be used to advantage.

The 1948 war resulted in the destruction of the Palestinian political and military organisation and the creation of a refugee community totally dependent on the host Arab states. But whether in exile, under Israeli occupation, annexed by Jordan (West Bank) or administered by Egypt (Gaza), the Palestinians retained their social structure. Even in the camps they regrouped according to the towns and villages from which they had been expelled.

During this period, which lasted until 1967, they were nothing more than a pawn to be used in the Arab-Israeli confrontation and in the playing out of inter-Arab rivalry. But they still looked to joint Arab action to liberate Palestine.

In 1964 the Arab League set up the PLO, through which the Arab states hoped to maintain control of a rising tide of Palestinian nationalism which had begun to be expressed by small guerrilla groups, despite the heavy-handed attempts of various Arab regimes to stop them.

The second period began with the June 1967 War, which showed the inability of the Arabs to regain Palestine and enabled the Palestinians to regain the initiative both politically and militarily. The guerrilla groups were able to act with greater freedom and their following rapidly increased, especially in the refugee camps. Al-Fateh, which put forward a simple, essentially Palestinian nationalist ideology, was the most successful, for

the Arab nationalism espoused by some of the smaller groups had been discredited.

The Arab states soon realised the significance of this new phenomenon and some sponsored their own guerrilla groups to make sure that their interests would be represented (Syria set up Al-Saiqa and Iraq the Arab Liberation Front (ALF)).

In 1969 the guerrillas, with Fateh firmly at the helm, took over the PLO and its various institutions and by 1970 their power had increased to such an extent in Jordan that King Hussein began to see them both directly and indirectly as a threat to his regime.

Arab interference in the Palestinian movement had continued during this period, impeding attempts to forge some real Palestinian unity from the various groups; the most overt manifestation of Arab involvement was Black September 1970, which obliged the PLO to transfer its main centre of activity to Lebanon. In general, however, the Palestinians, with their new-found identity, held their own against the Arab states, and until 1970 their guerrilla activities were a real headache for the Israeli authorities.

The third period, from 1973 to 1979, saw the initiative pass back to some extent to the Arabs, mainly as a result of Egypt's showing in the October War. The civil war in Lebanon also curtailed Palestinian freedom to continue armed struggle as a major method of liberating Palestine. This is when the PLO began to turn its attention to diplomacy, winning recognition from all the Arab states in 1974 at the Rabat summit meeting and then from the Third World and Eastern Europe.

It was at this point, however, that internal Palestinian differences made it necessary for the "moderate" Palestinian leadership centered on Arafat and the mainstream of Fateh to pursue their diplomacy with some circumspection. Contacts with Europe, the US and Israeli leftists and "doves" were all made unofficially by a group of Fateh leaders close to Arafat but not represented in the PLO leadership. These included Dr. Issam Sartawi, Sabri Jiryis, Said Hamami, PLO representative in London who was assassinated in 1977, and Ibrahim Souss, PLO representative in Paris.

PLO Political Department Head Farouq Qaddoumi acted as Arafat's troubleshooter, denying any PLO official involvement whenever the activities of this group caused too much criticism

from the other groups. During this period the Palestinian rejectionists, led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), were strengthened by Arab backing from the rejectionist Arab states: Iraq, Syria, Libya, Algeria and South Yemen.

The Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, however, once again changed the regional balance of power, uniting all the Arab states against this bilateral agreement but in favour of an alternative solution which would give the Palestinians a West Bank state.

All previous Arab alignments have been rendered irrelevant by this development. Even Jordan, which for many years wanted to regain control of the West Bank, has now realised that this would be no real solution.

The question of a Palestinian-Jordanian federation, which the PLO rejected outright in the early 1970s, has now been revived—with PLO approval—and Jordanian-Palestinian co-operation has reached a level which was never before possible. This change of Jordanian policy has strengthened the Palestinians immeasurably, for apart from the practical help now being given to the West Bankers it has removed the potential for a clash between pro-Hashemites and pro-PLO groups in the occupied territories.

The Palestinians cannot swim against the Arab tide in the post-Camp David era, and even the former rejectionists seem to have recognised this. Moves are afoot to bring the PFLP into the PLO Executive Committee, although Fateh's predominance in the organisation is still causing some problems here.

The PFLP, however, has dropped its longstanding demand that each

organisation should have equal representation within the PLO and has agreed to proportional representation based on the strength of each group. And even if these organisational difficulties cannot be overcome, no rejectionist voices have been raised against the PLO's diplomatic offensive.

Everything suggests that the Arab states are determined to solve the Palestinian problem in the near future and that they are using their considerable economic muscle to rally international support.

But despite 10 years of dependence on the goodwill of the Arab states the PLO has succeeded in gaining the support of the West Bank and Gaza. The populations of these territories are now fully committed to achieving independence, and acknowledge the PLO as their spokesman. Israel will find it increasingly difficult to rule these areas, and Jordan has realised the problems it would inherit if it regained control of the West Bank.

The PLO can now work with Jordan secure in the knowledge that its supporters far outnumber the old pro-Hashemite leadership, which is now discredited. The politicisation of the occupied territories may yet prove to be the PLO's most important achievement. Wisely the PLO is capitalising on the situation, having realised that half a state is better than no state and that the prospects for attaining that half are better than ever.

But the Begin Government still remains to be convinced, and that is one area where the Arabs and Palestinians are without influence. Only Washington can twist Begin's arm, and the US is not able to discuss the situation officially

with the PLO. The establishment of a government-in-exile could ease the position a little, but initially the Palestinians will have to depend on the Arab states and Europe to plead their cause with America.

The PLO's new realism also involves implied recognition of Israel. Israeli statements that the Palestinians still want to dismantle the state are the result of a realisation that it is not so. PLO leaders are withholding recognition until it can be mutual, but they frequently refer to it as their "most important card". The assumption must therefore be that it will be played sooner or later, and when it is, Israeli arguments against PLO participation in peace talks will crumble. The timing of this, however, is very important and Palestinian leaders cannot afford to make a mistake. The obvious readiness of the mainstream PLO leadership to give recognition in return for a West Bank state, however, is the best measure of how far policy has had to change to make the best of existing circumstances.

Overall, however, Palestinian diplomacy has paid off. Armed struggle played a vital part at the beginning, but the Palestinians will have to negotiate at some point.

Considering that they have always had to work mainly outside their land, at the mercy of inter-Arab politics, they have achieved a great deal. For they have made it possible even for the superpowers to impose a peace on the region which ignores their national rights.

Reprinted (complete and unedited) from The Middle East, November 1979, published in London.

Book Views

Anti-Israeli Influence in American Churches
A Background Report

By Judith Banki and Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
Interreligious Affairs Department,
American Jewish Committee, New York. 1979. 19 pp. 50¢

One God—a God of mercy and justice who exacts those qualities from all of us

—is proclaimed alike by Judaism, Christianity and Islam. True followers of each faith continue to draw closer together in mutual respect and cooperation as they recognize how much they share in common.

Twice as many Jews live in the United States as in any other nation. Friendly relations between Jewish and Christian neighbors and colleagues have arisen, from time to time bringing about pronouncements implying a shared understanding of divine requirements to specific human situations. And as the Muslim population grows in this

country, so does the increasing degree of Muslim-Christian dialogue and joint undertakings.

Against this backdrop of religious affirmative action is the published exercise in negativism—*Anti-Israel Influence in American Churches*, produced by the American Jewish Committee. "A number of religious leaders," the report avers, "have formed a Standing Conference of American Middle Eastern Christian and Muslim Leaders. The Antiochian Orthodox Metropolitan Philip Saliba is its Secretary General; the Melkite Archbishop, Joseph Tawil, is treasurer.

Maronite Bishop, Francis Zayek, is also a member, as are Imam Mohamad Jawad Chirri, Islamic Center in Detroit; Imam Muhammad Abdul-Rauf of the Islamic Center in Washington . . .”

“A move in a similar direction,” the tract continues, “was the formation of a task force on Christian-Muslim Relations and the establishment of an Islamic Desk at the National Council of Churches, in August 1977. The formal request came from Dr. Frank Maria and Metropolitan Saliba of the Antiochian archdiocese, both officers of the N.C.C. at the time. The two leaders emphasized that it was essential for American Christians to understand Arab Christian and Muslim attitudes and aspirations, ‘particularly in relation to a Middle East settlement.’”

Broad Initiatives for Cooperation

In attributing this development to the work of two Arab-American churchmen, the A.J.C. tract overlooks many others involved in the process. The N.C.C.’s Faith and Order Unit was at work on a Christian pattern to round out its durable program of Jewish-Christian dialogue and cooperation, while its Middle East Committee planned to imitate the British Council of Churches’ inclusion of Islamic concerns in its Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths.

The A.J.C. writers express no joy over such trends towards harmony among believers in the One God. Rather, they deplore them as sinister. They attribute the formation of the Standing Conference, for instance, to the initiative of anonymous “vehemently anti-Israel spokesmen.” As if to make this charge persuasive, their tract adds:

“On March 22, 1978, Metropolitan Saliba, acting for the Standing Conference, wired President Carter and Secretary of State Vance to protest the Israeli invasion and occupation of South Lebanon. In a press release of the Conference, issued on the letterhead of the Antiochian archdiocese, he commented: ‘Without Israeli withdrawal from all Arab occupied land and self-determination for the Palestinian people, there will never be peace in the land of the Prince of Peace.’”

“In the Washington area,” the report also notes, “Arab-American Muslim and Christian leaders came together to assure President Carter of their support for his human rights program. They particularly commended the 1977 United States-Soviet declaration con-

cerning objectives for an Arab-Israeli peace settlement (a move since eclipsed by President Sadat’s visit to Israel and the Camp David accords), and stressed that the legitimacy of Palestinian rights must be taken into account in any settlement.”

National Council Resolutions

Such sentiments are, of course, widely shared among patriotic Israelis and others around the world who wish Israel no harm. To some they seem like simple humanitarianism. Others view them as tangible expressions of the Judaeo-Christian-Islamic ethic. Yet the A.J.C. finds them “anti-Israel.”

So was the National Council of Churches’ resolution after the 1973 October War. Instead of denouncing the Syrians and Egyptians for attacking the Israeli armies of occupation in the Golan Heights and Sinai, “it pointed to the United Nations as ‘the primary instrument for achieving long-range peace’ and urged the United States and the Soviet Union ‘to halt immediately arms shipments to the belligerents....”

“Again, in May 1978, when Israel responded to a terrorist attack with a reprisal raid on southern Lebanon, the N.C.C.’s Governing Board passed a resolution scoring Israel’s use of cluster bombs and criticized the United States Government for supplying them”

“A recent resolution, adopted on November 3, 1978 by the N.C.C. Governing Board, combined elements of sympathy and antipathy toward Israel. It . . . rejoiced with Israel ‘in feeling that its dream of peace and deliverance might be realized and the threat of annihilation diminished.’ At the same time, the resolution underscored the Palestinians’ right to self-determination, reaffirmed ‘the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force,’ and urged President Carter ‘to broaden the context of the peace discussions to include recognized representatives of the Palestinian people in order to enable them to become full parties to the peace process.’”

The tract brands such efforts for peace and human rights as evidence of “anti-Israel bias.” It places the blame on “Protestant denominations with long-standing involvement in missions to the Arab Middle East.” It also focuses on the personal influence of Dr. Maria, who has, among other things, “pressed for investigations of

alleged human rights violations and breaches of international law in Israel and the occupied territories.” (But *Jerusalem Post* readers will remember that even such staunch defenders of the Israeli Establishment as David Krivine have made similar suggestions!)

Orthodox Pronouncements

The Antiochian Orthodox denomination has, indeed, passed various resolutions distasteful to the A.J.C., some evolving at the 1977 annual convention in Washington. One resolution “condemned the Israeli government’s legalizing three ‘additional Zionist-Israeli settlements on occupied Arab lands in violation of international law,’ and called on President Carter to persuade Israel ‘to abolish these settlements and any further illegal encroachments upon Arab territories’.... Another resolution, asserting that the Arab-Israeli conflict had been ‘the most poorly reported story in the history of American journalism, called upon the news media in this country and Canada to ‘stop being part of an insidious campaign to defame and misrepresent the Arabs.’”

Other worrisome resolutions “advocated American Christian-Islamic dialogue, settlement of the Lebanese conflict ‘with peace and justice for all,’ and relaxation of United States and Canadian immigration regulations to allow admission of Lebanese refugees.”

Noting the growing cooperation between the branches of Orthodox Christianity, the report fears that “a unified Orthodoxy would offer a far more prestigious platform” for statements like those quoted.

The A.J.C. sees further danger in the increasing fraternization between the Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholic churches, which jointly “hailed the United Nation’s recognition of the P.L.O., describing the latter as a ‘moderate organization.’” (This was near the time when Yasir Arafat told the United Nations General Assembly: “In my formal capacity as Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.... I proclaim before you that when we speak of our common hopes for the Palestine of tomorrow we include all Jews now living in Palestine who choose to live with us there in peace and without discrimination.... Today I have come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter’s gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand.”)

Jewish Friends of Palestinians

One startling revelation for newcomers to the Arab-Israeli scene lies in tract references to both Israeli and American Jews who are openly critical of Israeli governmental plans, policies and procedures. From the hundreds of thousands of such Jews in Israel it selects two who have worked hardest to apply Hebrew standards of compassionate fair play toward the Palestinians. They are Hebrew University Professor, Israel Shahak, and Rakah Attorney, Felicia Langer, whose writings "liberationists" in the churches "insistently publicize."

It was in the Nazis' Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, the A.J.C. neglects to mention, that Israel Shahak came to despise discrimination and repression from whatever source. He produced two volumes of data based on the theme that Zionism as practiced by the Israeli government is both racist and repressive. *Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights*, for example, researches a variety of human rights violations, reflected in its headings: Persecution of Christians in Israel, Deportation of Palestinians, Military Law in Israel, Labor Exploitation, Destruction of Arab Homes, Jewish Political Prisoners, Collective Punishment, Killings During Curfews, and Torture. His other book, *The Non-Jew in The Jewish State*, is a 138-page compilation of official documents and translations from the Israeli press which confirm charges listed in the former volume.

A small circle of English-speaking friends also receive Shahak translations from the Hebrew press on controversial matters not reported in the West. A recent collection deals with discrimination in favor of "veterans." In Israeli law, it seems, that term covers not only Israeli ex-soldiers and reserves. It also embraces all relatives of any Jew who has fought anti-Semitism anywhere. Thus, veterans' cost-of-living subsidies go exclusively and without reservation to Jewish families. The non-Jewish poor are left to contend with 100 percent inflation without supplemental government aid. This the professor cites as just one evidence of non-racial terms masking racist discrimination.

Langer's books are, *An Attorney's Testimony* (with a chapter by former United States Jerusalem vice-consul Alexandra U. Johnson), *With My Own Eyes* and *From My Diary*. All three deal with Palestinians she has defended

in court against what she considered arbitrary misapplications and circumventions of the law. Christians, Muslims and Jewish conscientious objectors aided by her services have described her as competent, dedicated, courageous, self-sacrificial, tender toward victims and tough toward victimizers.

Corrections, Please!

The tract fails to mention the published works of these two Israeli writers, and instead dismisses them in a terse and misleading manner. Inaccuracies in the characterization of certain Christians have also been pointed out by representatives of the denominations most severely attacked — Mennonite, Methodist, Presbyterian, Quaker, Reformed and United Church of Christ. Although the A.J.C. consistently demands the right to preview any church publications on the Middle East, it would have eliminated many of the tract's errors if it had put its own demands into practice. As it is, the question keeps arising: Were these inaccuracies merely the result of slovenly research or were they deliberate?

An editorial in the June 1 *Chicago Catholic*, titled "A New McCarthyism?", offers an interesting viewpoint:

Speaking from our own pro-Israeli standpoint, we'd like to express concern about charges made by the Interreligious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee that several Catholic and Protestant clergymen hold "anti-Israel" views.

We think it inappropriate to introduce this sort of McCarthyism into

interfaith affairs. It is more than absurd to require from any citizen, clergyman or otherwise, a loyalty oath to the State of Israel

How absurd are the demands of the American Jewish Committee for absolute conformity, and for the risk of a public smear by anyone who marches to a tune not played by Rabbi Tanenbaum.

From Jerusalem

During the week of July 21, the *Jerusalem Post* ran a lengthy feature article by Moshe Kohn which tells of "a recent meeting between Jewish-American and Israeli intellectuals who wrestled with their relationship." In it we read:

Most of the Israelis who spoke of dissent seemed to feel that American Jews aren't dissenting enough from Israeli policies to begin with, and certainly aren't vocal enough in expressing their dissent. Professor Uriel Simon of Bar-Ilan University, leader of the "dovish" Oz Veshalom movement, pleaded with the American Jewish spokesmen to distinguish between "endorsement of the Israeli administration" and "sympathy" with and support for the Israeli people.

One may hope that the A.J.C., thus prodded by both American Christians and Israeli Jews, will be more accurate and constructive in its future reactions to those who dare criticize aspects of Israeli official behavior which conflict with historic Hebrew ethics.

Reviewed by L. Humphrey Walz

Notices

Studies on the Palestinian Question, published by the United Nations Special Unit on Palestinian Rights, may be ordered from the Sales Section, United Nations, New York, NY 10017. These include: "Historical Background of the Palestinian Question, Part I: 1917-1947 and Part II: 1947-1977" (each part is \$6.00); "The Right of Self-Determination of the Palestinian People" (\$4.00); "The Right of Return of the Palestinian People" (\$3.00); "An International Law Analysis of the Major U.N. Resolutions Concerning the Palestinian Question" (\$6.00).

Arabic Cooking in America, recently revised and edited by Evelyn Menconi, is available, at \$6.00 per copy, from

Arabic Cooking in America, P.O. Box 52, Boston, MA 02215. All profits from this very popular book go to the Musa Alami Foundation to support the Vocational School for boys in Jericho, Jordan.

A.M.E.U.'s Matching Gift Program for libraries enables you, for \$42.00, to contribute to the library of your choice a selection of significant books on the Middle East, list-priced around \$90.00. Designate, with your check for \$42.00, the name of the school or public library you have chosen. We will send the set of books (usually twelve to fourteen in number) to that library, with a card announcing that the gift is being sent in your name.

Books To Order

Uri Avnery, *Israel Without Zionists: A Plea for Peace in the Middle East*. Macmillan Publishing. 278 pp. \$1.95 (paperback). A remarkable description of Israeli politics, as presented by a member of Israel's Knesset and the sole representative of a party that believes in the transformation of the Jewish state into a pluralistic and secular one that is able to achieve reconciliation with the Arabs. Our price, \$1.70.

Robert B. Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, rev. 1978. John Knox. 318 pp. \$12.00. A comprehensive study of the Arabic-speaking Christians and the role they have played in the Middle East from the time of the Islamic conquest up to present day developments. Valuable demographic statistics and a comprehensive bibliography included. Our price, \$7.75.

John H. Davis, *The Evasive Peace*, revised 1976, Dillon/Liederbach Inc. 136 pp. \$5.95. Factual background to present Arab-Israeli dilemma, with a prescription for peace in Middle East. Our price, \$3.60.

Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*. Croom Helm (London) 361 pp. \$24.95. Spells out Zionist views on the Palestinians prior to 1948 by outlining assumptions shared by most Zionists. In spite of differences within the Zionist movement, these assumptions continue in the present. Our price, \$15.50.

A.C. Forrest, *The Unholy Land*, Devin-Adair Co. 178 pp. \$3.95 (paperback). The author's personal, informed and uncompromising stand against what he considers to be imbalanced and distorted news coverage of the human tragedy brought about by the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. Our price, \$3.60.

David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, Faber & Faber. 367 pp. 6.50 pounds. Aptly subtitled "The Roots of Violence in the Middle East." In tracing these roots, the author explodes a number of myths about both Arabs and Zionists. A carefully researched and documented account. Our price, \$8.05.

Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, Monthly Review Press. 314 pp. \$12.50. Expanded version of Jiryis' original authoritative account of the deprivation of Arabs living in Israel. Our price, \$7.85.

Middle East Mosaic series, Friendship Press.

David H. Bowman, *Conflict or Community*. 47 pp. \$2.75. Our price, \$1.85.

Robert A. Elfers, *Sojourn in Mosaic*. 88 pp. \$2.95. Our price, \$2.00.

Alan Geyer, ed., *Peace, Justice and Reconciliation*. 64 pp. \$2.75. Our price, \$1.85.

John B. Taylor, *The World of Islam*. 56 pp. \$3.95. Our price, \$2.60.

Anthony Pearson, *Conspiracy of Silence: The Attack on the U.S.S. Liberty*, Horizon Press. 179 pp. \$9.95. An account of the Israeli attack on the Liberty during the June 1967 Middle East War and the ensuing lack of publicity and information. The author believes it was not an accident, as the Israelis claimed, and gives reasonably certain conclusions as to why the attack took place and the reasons for the cover-up. Our price, \$6.85.

Ephraim Sevela, *Farewell, Israel*, Gateway Editions. 295 pp. \$12.95. The author's disenchantment with Israel, which he had thought would be the fulfillment of his dreams, is emotionally expressed in his treatment of what he calls Israel's "racism" and the disintegration of the world's Jewish communities. Our price, \$8.10.

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