

## American Jews and the Middle East: Fears, Frustration and Hope

By Allan Solomonow

The 1980's may well become the "Decade of the Middle East." Even Khomeini and Kabul aside, no region of the world is so critical to the future of America's international and domestic policies as the Middle East. And no other American group is more crucial to the area's future than is the American Jewish community.

The Middle East has become the gauge for Presidential leadership: the cause of Ambassador Young's United Nations resignation; the scene of a costly United States military rescue attempt; and the aorta of world energy needs. Even in local arenas, politicians have brought up the Middle East—New York City Mayor Edward Koch's recent comment about President Carter's "Gang of Five."

Given this primacy of the Middle East, one would naturally expect to find the American public engrossed in a broad-ranging if tense dialogue with American Jews regarding the formulation of an American policy to end the decades of regional turmoil. In fact, the opposite is closer to the truth: There is little public dialogue on the alternatives for peace in the Middle East.

Public discourse on the Middle East is laden with pitfalls. The complexities of the arguments and the fervor of their advocates are intimidating. Criticism of Israeli policy betrays one as an "anti-Semite," an enemy of Israel and the Jewish people. The opposite is every bit as true: Criticism of the P.L.O., whose

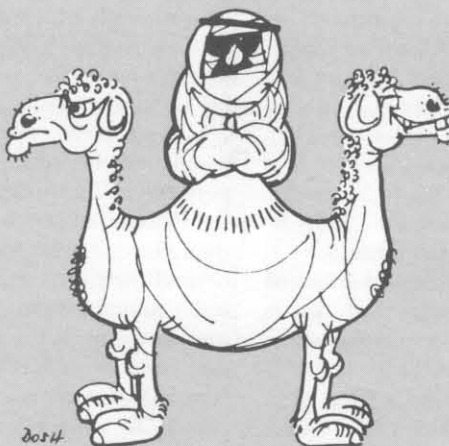
rhetoric and terror make it vulnerable, is an easy way for a politician to pick up a few votes. Criticism of the P.L.O. is taken to mean an attitude in support of American imperialism and against the interests of the peoples of the Third World.

At the focal point of this sensitivity is the American Jewish community. Critics see it as powerful (at least on this issue), essentially monolithic and unwilling to compromise or admit fault. Jewish leaders are depicted as: apologists for Begin; hypocritically against their own sentiments; and opponents to Palestinian rights, including self-determination.

The defenders of Israel find it difficult to comprehend this line of argument. They see Israel as weak, defenseless and isolated, with a beleaguered economy sustained only by the vagaries of

American policy and the aid permitted. There is no question that America's future policy will reflect different world priorities and Israel will be set aside in favor of the Arab oil-producing states.

Both perspectives contain a significant amount of truth. It will not do to maintain that "All you need to do is examine the facts about Israel, and the case becomes clear. If you value justice, democracy, and equality, then your place belongs on Israel's side."<sup>1</sup> Nor will it help to picture "the Jewish people" as the stumbling block in the road towards peace and stability. But the Jewish community does play an integral part in American opinion and policy. To understand that role and the prospects of dialogue, an effort must be made to understand the Jewish community.



## About This Issue

Allan Solomonow has worked full time for the last ten years on the questions of Middle East peace: first with CONAME, then the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and now with the Middle East Peace Project. He has traveled throughout the Middle East and edited five books including, *The Jewish Roots of Nonviolence* and, most recently, *Where We Stand: Statements of American Churches on the Middle East Conflict*. He was the first Program Director for the Jewish Peace Fellowship.

The Middle East Peace Project is a national interreligious effort to bring together resources and programs to stimulate a national dialogue on peaceful alternatives for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and Jewish-Palestinian reconciliation in particular. M.E.P.P. stocks a variety of literature. Copies of its current list can be ordered

from: The Middle East Peace Project  
339 Lafayette Street  
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Some of the material appearing in this issue is drawn from a more comprehensive study of Palestinian stereotypes found in typical Jewish educational materials. The study will be published in July 1980. Copies may be ordered from M.E.P.P. for \$2.

Two books are reviewed on pages 14 and 16: *Decision on Palestine* by Evan Wilson and *My Home, My Prison* by Raymonda Tawil. Wilson, a thirty-year veteran of the State Department, worked on the Palestine Desk for nearly six years prior to the creation of Israel. Reviewer John H. Davis directed the relief, health and education program aiding Palestinian refugees in the Arab countries, while acting as commissioner-general of the United Nations Relief and

Work Agency. Dr. Davis serves on the A.M.E.U. Board of Directors.

*My Home, My Prison* is the autobiography of Raymonda Tawil, a Palestinian woman living on the West Bank, who is a strong advocate of dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. Her book is reviewed by Ann Lesch, author of *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917-1939*, who has known Raymonda since 1975, when they met in Ramallah.

Both books may be obtained from A.M.E.U. at discount prices; see p. 15.

Our September/October issue will focus on the Gulf state of Kuwait, a 7,780-square mile country, whose 400,000 citizens average the highest real income of any nation in the world.

John F. Mahoney,  
*Executive Director*

## Jewish Fear Rooted In a Continuing Legacy

The psychological trauma of centuries of exile and persecution culminating in the holocaust have left an indelible imprint upon the psyche of virtually all Jews. This existential reality is not readily open to debate. The burden of guilt of many Jews, distant in time and place from this suffering, has helped to form a "holocaust mentality," a shared fear which has become integral to the framework of modern Jewish identity.

Throughout the world, Jews are overwhelmingly committed to the survival of the State of Israel. The precise formula for that survival is disputed amongst Jews inside Israel and in the diaspora. In a way, preoccupation with Israeli security and survival forestalls questions of immense importance to the ultimate survival of Jews as "Jews"; namely, "Who is a Jew?" What role will non-Orthodox Judaism play in an Orthodox-dominated Jewish state? How will Israel deal with its Sephardi (non-European) majority and Soviet and Falasha minorities?

World Jewry has reached a point of crisis. Most Jews have chosen to live as "Jews" without immigrating to Israel. Many Israeli Jews have chosen to live

abroad. The vision of Israel as a sanctuary for the "ingathering" of the Jewish people is dissolving. Even without further wars, in the absence of a comprehensive peace settlement with all of its neighbors, Israel cannot endure economically or spiritually.

Israeli policy has not brought greater security to Israel. Continued insecurity has caused Jews to turn inward, to become more defensive, to insist on a kind of "united front." The theme running through Israeli policy is *kein breira*, ("no alternative"): We must arm because we have no choice; we must be unyielding because we have no choice.

Unique as the experience of the Jewish people may be, many threads of its experience and attitudes parallel those of the Palestinian people. Doubly ironic is the failure of both peoples to look beyond their own tenuous future in order to understand and embrace the mutual agony of the other. Jewish concern for survival has translated into a certainty of Arab rejection of the Jewish people. In a literal sense, Jewish fear needs to have a "scapegoat" to unify it in the face of what is perceived as over-

whelming adversity.

This fear for the survival of Israel has had a decisive impact upon contemporary American Jewish life. The traditionally liberal values Judaism embodies have gradually moved towards the center of American political life, a change of direction guided by practical political considerations. Simply stated, America supports the State of Israel; to avoid alienating that support Jews ought to support American policy or at least not criticize it.

For the sake of Israel, Jews have "Americanized" their values. As one major Jewish organization notes, "Today, the lifestyle and ideals of Jews and other Americans are becoming ever more similar."<sup>2</sup>

Where Jews once called for less armaments, they now support more armaments; where once Jews supported detente, they now rally against communism; where Jews once supported the United Nations, many are now critical; where Jews were once in the vanguard of equal rights, they have given way to opposition of affirmative action. The keen Jewish commitment to peace and social

justice is being transformed into quietly working within.

It has become fashionable for Jews to criticize "the Left," the Christian community, or sympathy with the Third World and its liberation movements. Certainly American Jews are still the most consistently liberal ethnic group in the United States; yet that is inexorably changing and is most evident in issues of foreign affairs. And the reason is the survival of Israel.

During the early years of protest against the American government's policy in Vietnam, Americans were told that it was wrong to criticize our government: criticism only undermined the policy of the government in trying to bring about peace. In much the same way, the leadership of the American Jewish community vigorously argues that Jews "must not air our dirty laundry in public" lest Jewish disunity be taken as a

sign of weakness by non-Jews as well as Israel's enemies. This dilemma is vividly depicted in an article by Carolyn Toll, a young Jewish journalist-activist. (See below.)

While detailed debates on the intricacies of Middle East issues rage in Israel and members of the Israeli Knesset meet with P.L.O. leadership, Americans remain isolated from that vital debate in the belief that Israel's security will be enhanced.

On the one hand, Israelis have argued that their peace community, in particular Peace Now, with its massive public support, should express their sentiments only in Israel. The government has actively tried to prevent their contacts with Jewish communities outside Israel. On the other hand, it is argued that American Jews who are distant from the conflict, have no right to speak out in opposition to the Israeli government's

policies. The premise was simply put by one noted American Jewish scholar, "These people are traveling from country to country criticizing and attacking their own government, whereas it is the accepted norm in all civilized societies that one does not attack one's government in foreign lands."<sup>3</sup>

For the Jewish community this premise has helped to quash debate and place a severe penalty on Jews who may choose to ignore it. For the Christian community, it is made clear its historic guilt in dealing with the Jewish people deprives it of the right to use its judgment in a manner that might jeopardize the policies of the Israeli government. Few Jews, even those sharply critical of Israeli policy, are willing to address a Christian audience and, when they do, they rarely speak with the frankness found inside the Jewish community.

Despite all appearances, the American  
(Continued on page 5)

## American Jews and The Middle East Dilemma

"Why are American Jews so callous to the suffering of the Palestinians?" I was asked abruptly one day by a new staff member of a national peace organization.

It was a perfectly rational question, one many Jews debate among themselves—but addressed to me by an American Christian, it troubled and frightened me.

It was a natural question for a peace activist to ask. As our news media have reported, there is a growing peace movement within Israel itself. But where are the large support rallies by American Jews in the peace movement and on the Left? Why is there no Middle East Peace Campaign, complete with media blitz, in the United States? Where are the Jewish celebrities who will express solidarity with the doves willing to accept a Palestinian state in return for true peace?

It is a conspicuous omission. Such an American support group could play an important role in strengthening the Israeli doves' influence. Instead, the pervasive impression is that the American Jewish community will support whatever line the Israeli government takes. That image of a monolithic American Jewish community has been carefully cultivated by a handful of national Jewish organizations. They have managed to portray American Jewry as more jingoistic and hawkish than most Israelis are, less willing to discuss the issues openly, and more callous towards other people's pain.

I could have told the peace worker who confronted me with that vexing

question that the American Jewish community is really *not* a monolith, that thousands of Jews around the country feel concern for the fate of the Palestinians and regard it as central to a just and peaceful solution in the Middle East. I could have told her she has not heard about these Jews because the mainstream Jewish organizations in the United States have worked hard with the media to convey the image of a solid Jewish voting bloc behind official Israeli policy.

I could have told her about the rise and fall of Breira, a short-lived attempt to foster support here for Israeli doves and give them the kind of forum they have in Israel. I could have told her of the witch hunt tactics and McCarthyite smear campaign used by the Jewish establishment to hound Breira out of existence in an effort to conceal the reality of a split in the American Jewish community.

I could have criticized the suppression of free speech in American Jewish institutions—the pressures that prevent dovish or dissident Jews from organizing in synagogues, Jewish community centers, and meetings of major national Jewish organizations. I could have talked further of Jewish attempts to suppress free speech on this issue among non-Jewish American peace groups as well, such as denunciations of the American Friends Service Committee as "anti-Semitic" and "dupes of the Palestine

Liberation Organization" for insisting that any true peace must include a viable state for the Palestinians.

I could have told her about a shocking private debate among American Jews as to whether we can really take the "risk" of genuine open discussion on this issue, and of the agonizing done by staunch leftists (who would champion anyone else's right to free speech) before cautiously deciding for free speech "but with discipline."

Such answers might have persuaded her that American Jews are not unanimously indifferent to the suffering of the Palestinians—but I could not give them because my fundamental response to her was emotional, simply as a Jew whose subliminal fear of anti-Semitism was tapped by her blunt question. I could not help asking myself, "Is she anti-Semitic?" Nothing in the way she asked the question gave me a clue as to whether she felt the same concern for Jews as for Palestinians. I needed to know whether I could trust her before I could tell her the truth. I did not want to seem to disassociate myself from the collective body of Jews to win her approval. For while I may share some of her views, I share the fate of my fellow Jews.

Carolyn Toll, "American Jews and the Middle East Dilemma,"  
*The Progressive*, August 1979.

# Is That Me?...



Josh  
TEL-AVIV  
1970



Israel as "Oppressor"



Israel as "Expansionist"



Israel as "Militarist"

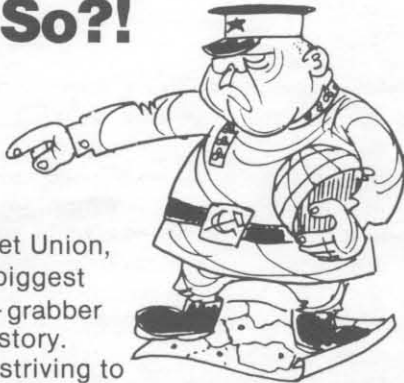


Israel as "Brute"



Israel as "Reactionary"

# Who Says So?!



Soviet Union, the biggest land-grabber in history. Still striving to expand and dominate



The hangmen of Bagdad. Kidnapers, torturers. So-called "freedom fighters," killers of school children



Arab states ruled by military cliques, fanatical, jealous officers, always plotting new bloody revolutions



Fabulously rich tyrants, keeping their peoples in poverty and ignorance. Diligent servants of Society imperialism



Police regimes, ruthless oppressors of minorities, persecutors of free thought and dissent



Maybe I am not as nice and meek as I look, but I do wish people would notice that all those who slander me—they actually describe themselves (a very common fault also in private life)...After all, I have not much to be ashamed of except the determination to survive (very much resented by almost everybody...)

(Continued from page 3)

Jewish community is far from monolithic. Every Jew is familiar with the story, "If you have three Jews gathered together, you have four opinions."

What American Jews believe is not always readily apparent. A poll taken last year under the direction of the Israeli government held that most American Jews were opposed to the settlement policy of the Begin government. Israeli polls have affirmed a similar sentiment in Israel. Also, last fall an Israeli poll stated that 28.6 percent of Israelis supported Israeli negotiations with the P.L.O. once it recognizes Israel's right to exist.<sup>4</sup>

In the wake of recent Israeli actions in the occupied territories, expropriating lands north of Jerusalem, and permitting Jewish schools in Hebron, the Begin government has further reduced what remaining credibility it has with world Jewry. On the more volatile issue of the P.L.O., a recent article in *Present Tense*, a major Jewish quarterly, inquired: "Is there in fact any ultimate alternative to Israel's acceptance of Palestinian nation-

alism as authentic and legitimate and to its acceptance of the P.L.O. as the entity with which to negotiate a settlement? Is there not a strong case for Israel's doing this sooner rather than later, before its bargaining position deteriorates past the point of no return?"<sup>5</sup>

There has always been significant dissent within the Jewish community. That dissatisfaction has been growing and will continue. If the Jewish community has appeared monolithic, it has been out of an earnest though erroneous belief that "solidarity" was an essential element to Jewish security, and thus, survival. General Arik Sharon, Israel's reactionary Minister of Agriculture, has argued that public dissent was harmful to Israeli security. It is becoming evident that there is more than one possible definition of security; that there is another answer to the status quo policy which is carrying out a redoubled settlement effort. Increasingly, there are Jews who see Israel's security as being best served by halting that policy, something possible only when there is public debate.

The pace at which Middle East policy questions become "normalized" for public discussion will be influenced by the non-Jewish community. One common assertion is that Israel is inherently expansionist and racist, and thus constitutionally unable to reach a *modus vivendi* with the Arab peoples. Images like this carry more anger than truth but, worse, they fuel the most paranoid of Jewish fears, strengthening the fanatics of the right and undercutting the many Israeli voices for a "Semitic detente."

This is a mutual process. When non-Jews dwell upon the imperatives of Gush Emunim and even the Begin government, they discourage moderates within the P.L.O. Similarly, when Jews dwell upon the terrorism of radical Palestinians, they undercut the credibility of Israeli moderates.

What is needed is neither rejection nor blind acceptance of conventional Jewish views, but a dialogue among Jews, Moslems and Christians as equals in the pursuit of peace.

## Educational Materials Shape Preconceived Notions About Arabs

Jewish attitudes towards the Arab peoples, and Palestinian Arabs in particular, have been conditioned by the portrayals found in educational materials produced in the Jewish community. These materials have strongly reinforced the negative images carried over from the time of Jewish resettlement in Israel around the turn of the century.

The dominant Jewish perception of the Arabs has been propagandistically distorted in order to justify Israeli policies, which assume that peace is not possible on any terms other than those Israel has offered because the values of the Arab community are hostile and inferior.

Biased Jewish opinions of Arabs have strengthened Jewish fears which, in turn, have prompted the Jewish community to search for further affirmation of their already biased predisposition. This circle of fear-feeding-misperception has locked Jews into attitudes that appear reasonable and are difficult to question without addressing the fundamental assumptions on which they have been built. The net result is an inability to ad-

dress the key political issues, in effect, non-issues for Jews who are convinced that Arabs can't be trusted, because they hate Jews and want to destroy Israel.

The Jewish perception of Arabs contrasts with the time-held spirit of relative tolerance within the Jewish and Islamic societies. Moreover, Jewish persecution, which came about mostly at the hands of Christians, has moved the Jewish people to make an invaluable contribution to the world as an interpreter of anti-Semitism and, more generally, the anatomy of bigotry.

Applying the same standards to Jewish depiction of the Arabs that one applies to portrayals of the Jewish people, it is evident that Jewish attitudes are as anti-Arab as others are anti-Semitic. This appears to be the case in the Arab community as well; Jewish and Arab teachings are less for thoughtful inquiry than for affirming the conventional (and incorrect) wisdom.

The dominant attitude towards anti-Jewish attitudes is, roughly, that whatever is critical of Jews and Israel is at least potentially anti-Jewish and that

mere apathetic lack of positive support might also be included. This perspective is found in the work of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith:

But as the content of this book has demonstrated, there is abroad in our land a large measure of indifference to the most profound apprehensions of the Jewish people; a blandness and apathy in dealing with anti-Jewish behavior; a widespread incapacity or unwillingness to comprehend the necessity of the existence of Israel to Jewish safety and survival throughout the world.

This is the heart of the new anti-Semitism.<sup>6</sup>

According to those vociferous defenders of "the necessity of the existence of Israel to Jewish safety and survival," any criticism of the Israeli government's policy to achieve that goal is necessarily destructive. Thus, for advocating Israeli survival through negotiations with the P.L.O. for an independent Palestinian state with security guarantees for Israel, the distinguished

Jewish journalist, I.F. Stone, has been labelled, "the comrade of those who call openly for the massacre of all Jews in Israel."<sup>7</sup>

The more moderate position within the organizational Jewish community has been expressed in an American Jewish Committee report:

Concern for the welfare of Palestinian refugees does not, in itself, constitute hostility to Israel. Nor does appreciation of Arab culture, interest in religious dialogue with Islam, or disapproval of specific policies of the Israeli government.<sup>8</sup>

The report went on to distinguish between valid and invalid criticism. The latter occurs when a "double standard" is used, for instance, to criticize Israel for certain actions without any effort to criticize the Arab world for similar actions. In short, this approach permits divergence from Israeli and Jewish support but limits that divergence by insisting that it be "balanced."

Each of these approaches, to one degree or another, assumes that criticism of Israel is biased unless one makes a positive effort to express support of Israel.

A fair way to determine prejudice is to apply the same standard by which you judge others to the way others judge you. For instance, is it "valid" to condemn those who criticize Israel's policy of settlements on the West Bank if they do not also mention P.L.O. terrorism? If that balancing is necessary, should not those who criticize P.L.O. terrorism also condemn Israeli settlements?

A considerable amount of effort has been devoted by the Jewish community to document the biases of the Arab community; for instance in the incorrect generalization that Zionism is racism. It is also important for the Jewish community to apply a similar standard in its perceptions of Arabs.

In 1971 a Time-Louis Harris poll in Israel ascertained that by at least a two-to-one margin, Israelis believed:

1. Arabs to be less intelligent than Israelis.

2. Most Arabs have a blind hatred towards Israel.
3. Arabs are more cruel than Israelis.
4. Arabs are not as brave as Israelis.
5. Arabs are more dishonest than Israelis.
6. Arabs are inferior to Israelis.<sup>9</sup>

In a more recent study of 1,000 Israeli children's books, Adir Cohen, dean of Haifa University's School of Education, found that the most frequent character traits attributed to Arabs are "cowardice and a lack of resourcefulness."<sup>10</sup>

The lack of objectivity becomes evident when examining typical materials used in the American Jewish community to assist young Jews in "understanding" what the Middle East conflict is all about.

1. *Stereotypes, caricatures, and sweeping generalizations of Arabs and the "Arab mentality."* A basic component of prejudice is a given quality attributed to a people as a people. For instance, Jews have been sensitive to unfair caricatures of alleged "Jewish" qualities, such as cunning, deceit, a lust for power. Yet Jewish textbooks include numerous references to "primitive" Arabs, "fanatics," "killers," "marauders" and "terrorists." (See box for typical phrases.)

A typical picture of a Palestinian appears in a recent review of Trevanian's book *Shibumi* in the *Jerusalem Post*:

The plot is sheer nonsense but Trevanian's prejudices and lengthy racist analyses...occasionally hit on truths...

"The Arab's body was not designed for clothes requiring posture and discipline," writes Trevanian, introducing his main butt whom he thereafter refers to as a "P.L.O. goatherd." "Virginity," he writes, "is important to Arabs, who dread comparison, and with good reason."

"In my country," says the P.L.O. goatherd, "a man's life can be purchased for what, in dollars, would be two bucks, thirty-five cents."

To which Trevanian's condescending C.I.A. chief responds: "That's a fair price for one of your countrymen."

And a last quote about the Palestinians: "We would all be happier if the Palestinian issue (and the Palestinians with it) would simply disappear. They're a nasty, ill-disciplined, vicious lot."<sup>11</sup>

2. *Palestinians are not depicted as a people but only as a political problem.* Although Jews and Palestinians have lived together for centuries and continue to live in relative peace, educational

## Typical Phrases From Jewish Textbooks

Arab marauders...<sup>1,5</sup>

Arab propagandists...<sup>2</sup>

feeding on hatred and visions of revenge...<sup>1</sup>

Arab extremist leaders...<sup>2</sup>

pawns moved on the board of history by forces beyond their control...<sup>1</sup>

Arab hostility...<sup>2,5</sup>

the most miserable Arabs in the world...<sup>3</sup>

All Arab countries have had a violent history, full of plots and assassinations...<sup>3</sup>

Frenzied Arab mobs everywhere screamed for a *jihād*, a holy war which would exterminate the Jews...<sup>3</sup>

- (1) *Amos Elon*, *Understanding Israel* (New York: Behrman House, 1976);
- (2) *Harry Essrig and Abraham Segal*, *Israel Today* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1977);
- (3) *Nora Benjamin Kubie*, *The Jews of Israel* (New York: Behrman House, 1975);
- (4) *Emil Lehman*, *Israel: Idea and Reality* (New York: United Syn. Bk., 1962);
- (5) *M. Luvish*, *Challenge of Israel* (New York: Ktav, 1969).

Arab methods (of warfare) were marked by killings, mutilations and lootings. They regard every member of the opposing group, whether soldier or civilian, as an enemy to be ruthlessly destroyed.<sup>4</sup>

The Arabs will have to show more respect for physical labor...<sup>2</sup>

materials dwell almost entirely on what harm the Arabs and Palestinians have done to the Jewish people and what good the Israelis have returned.

One chapter of a recent text has a section entitled, "Why They Hate Israel."<sup>12</sup> Jews learn of why Israel's land purchases were legal; why the Arabs waged successive wars against Israel, while providing few references to prominent Palestinians, their lives, institutions, concerns or achievement other than those brought about at Israeli hands.

On the one hand texts speak of Arab hatred towards Israel and on the other hand they describe the passiveness and acceptance of Israeli society. Except for the text by Essrig and Segal, all note that Egypt is Israel's most steadfast enemy.

3. *There are no "Palestinians" or when there are, they have no rights or identity.* Jews have often criticized Palestinians for refusing to acknowledge the right of Israel to exist. Out of fear and insecurity, the Jewish community has shunned any reference to "Palestinians," preferring to depict the people as "refugees."

Most textbooks make no reference to "Palestinians," let alone Palestinian Arabs or a Palestinian people. As recently as 1976, one text by a well-known Israeli liberal, Amos Elon, referred only to "Arab" and "Arab refugee" throughout the book.

More subtly, in the Essrig and Segal book used in the reform Jewish community, the term "Palestinian" only comes into use at a somewhat ambiguous point following the 1967 War, thereby implying a lack of historic identity to Palestinian Arabs.

While these nuances might be taken as a trivial excursion into the realm of semantics, it also reveals the considerable efforts partisans take to phrase history in a manner that merely defines only their position.

4. *Israel is perceived as democratic and modern while the Arab world is seen as backward and inferior.* At least in Western eyes, Israel seems a basically Western state with democratic institutions and freedoms. It has a technological base and is a dependable ally opposed to the spread of communism.

The Arab world as a whole is seen as one of primitive agriculture, camels and desert, suppressed women, and a lack of medical, sanitation and educational facilities. The implication is that Western progress is an inherently good quality just as its absence is bad. (See box listing attitudes.)

## Moslem-Arab Attitudes

1. Inertia and lethargy mark the Arab, due primarily to the teaching in the Koran that all events are predetermined by God.

2. The Arabs look backward rather than forward because of pride in their great cultural, military and political achievements of the past.

3. There is no unity in the Arab world because of age-old religious disagreements and fragmentation of rule dating from the early days of the Empire.

4. Arab masses oppose secularism, that is, the separation of church and state which Arab leadership regards as necessary in the modern world.

5. There is no real sense of nationhood because most people's allegiance is to family, tribe, and religion, not to state.

6. Lack of initiative, combined with resistance to change because of the habit of centuries, prevents progress in industrialization, in agricultural methods, in sanitation and health.

7. Sense of inferiority when comparing progress, riches and achievements of West with Arab lack of progress, resulting in envy and hatred of Western countries.

8. Fear and distrust of foreigners because of past history of foreign rule, exploitation and mistreatment.

### Problems

1. Insufficient water supply in most lands and inadequate industrialization, preventing economic self-sufficiency.

2. Poor health due to primitive sanitation and insufficient medical facilities.

3. Constantly increasing population, with land unable to support present numbers.

4. Low literacy rate resulting in inability of masses to contribute toward economic and political progress.

5. Inefficiency and irresponsibility of leadership, with accompanying instability of governments.

6. Restlessness and dissatisfaction of people because propaganda promises of leaders do not match performance.

7. Insufficient technological skills to increase industrialization because of low educational levels.

### Views about Israel

1. Palestine was once part of the Arab community and must remain so. It belongs to the Palestinians.

2. England mandated land, after promises of independence, under Zionist influence; then United Nations gave it to Israel when it was not theirs to give. Zionism is a Western transplant; Israel was established by Western imperialists.

3. Israel is a constant expansionist threat; it wants all Jews to settle there and must expand to provide room.

4. Arab states agreed at Khartoum (September 1967) that there shall be no recognition of Israel, no negotiations, no peace.

5. The rights of the refugees must be upheld; they must be repatriated. Jews who wish to live there should be free to do so, in a Palestine State.

*Axelroth/Schoolman, Behind The Arab Mind, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, New York, 1967, pp. 5-6.*

The tone of these materials is appealing to Americans. Yet it also harbors what amounts to a Western-oriented racism; that what we Americans do is necessarily desirable and attainable. That Arab societies are basically unstable, unpredictable and necessarily

undesirable, making them vulnerable to communism and/or religious fanaticism.

5. *The Middle East conflict is an example of the universal struggle of good against evil.* "Truth is the first casualty of war." A war situation never seems to

make sense in mobilizing the resources of a country unless each party can convince its citizens that its struggle is a matter of life against death, and that the only alternative is to fight. Once having made that declaration, it is almost impossible to define oneself out of it. Sustained sacrifice can only be built upon the perpetuation of a massive stereotype of the opponent.

Mainstream Jewish attitudes originally rested upon the premise that the Arab world was united in seeking the physical annihilation of Israel and that they were not capable of any alteration in that strategy. In the wake of Camp David, this has been modified to refer to the P.L.O. and the "radical" Arab states.

By extension, whoever supports the P.L.O. must favor the violent dismemberment of the State of Israel. Any act, any word used, and political position must come down on one side or the other (which also means that neutrals are damned by both sides). It is imperative for each partisan to try to convince the world that there is no middle ground as each is convinced that its structure of morality is superior and will prevail.

This mentality would have us believe that Israel has made no (significant)

human rights violations and is acting solely in the minimal way for its survival. Or that the Palestinians are only undertaking what minimal terrorism is essential to their aspirations.

Jewish books are then in the awkward position of denying all Palestinian rights, for if Palestinians have some rights, why not all those that Jews have? Each is in an untenable position demeaning those of us who are asked for blind support.

It would be wrong, however, to generalize regarding all educational materials. Recent Jewish textbooks make mention of the sources of Israeli-Palestinian tension, the Deir Yassin massacre (often not mentioned by name), Palestinian human rights and the P.L.O. *Keeping Posted*, a popular Jewish magazine for youth, called on Jewish students to "make an effort to speak to anyone who claims to represent the Palestinian Arabs" and to support the Palestinian right to self-determination.

The existence of bias and racism in Jewish educational materials is neither surprising nor necessarily shameful, except to the extent that it indicates that the Jewish people can be like any other people including the Palestinians: self-centered, blinded, and filled with disabl-

ing rationalizations. Once seen and understood, it can be changed and the Jewish people and Israel will be the better for it.

## How To Conduct A Meeting of Arab Governments

Because of Arab recognition of the necessity of unified action, all resolutions must be passed unanimously by the delegations. It should be observed that only Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia are at all likely to change their positions; the other three must remain stubborn, antagonistic, superior and belligerent. The chairman shall attempt to maintain order, but outbursts, shouting, wrangling and vituperation are to be expected. Some unanimity should result, but complete agreement on all points means the delegations are not properly committed to their national aims, and their pro-Israeli instincts are showing.

*Axelroth & Schoolman, Behind the Arab Mind, New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, p. 33.*

## Jewish Groups Diverge On Middle East Outlook

Vital discussions of alternatives for Middle East peace occur in Israel where a variety of political parties, from Communists to zealous nationalists, contend in public forums and the media. Avowed Zionists have met with P.L.O. leadership and are, in turn, threatened by Jewish "fascists" who demand annexation of the territories and expulsion of their Palestinian populace.

In 1976 Israelis would have laughed at the thought of Menachem Begin becoming Prime Minister. At election time, his own party members would have scoffed at the idea of an Egyptian peace. Who would have thought that many of his compatriots of three decades would then desert him for having jeopardized the integrity of Israel—by giving back the Sinai and setting into motion what they earnestly regarded as the inevitable road to a Palestinian State and, thus, the destruction of the State of Israel?

Israeli power and policy harbor a number of contradictions that relate to the continuation of the Middle East conflict. Israel's accumulating economic problems are a product of its inability to provide absolute defensive superiority and meet the economic needs of its population and immigrants. Increasing emphasis on defense as a national priority has isolated Israel economically and politically. This isolation served to heighten Israel's perception that it must stand together with the United States or alone, if need be, to stave off the forces prepared to snuff out Israel.

This garrison-state mentality has been instrumental in building a wall between Jews and Palestinians. Jewish insecurity is taken out upon the indigenous Palestinians through social, economic and political isolation accompanied by the kinds of stereotypes just described. That has only compounded the problem

and the resulting tensions.

Many Israelis are aware of the formidable consequences of these developments. Even those who are non-political know that occupation, growing racism, and all they entail, can be more dangerous to the long-term existence of the Jewish State than any direct military threat.

The election of the Likud coalition of Menachem Begin was not a test of strength over Israeli policy towards the Arab world but a repudiation of the economic policies of Israel's perennial Labour coalition. That issue now appears on the verge of bringing down Likud or at least moving the elections to a point earlier than the mandated November 1981, if the peace negotiations do not bring this about first.

There is a strong Israeli peace community within Israel: those who reject expansion or occupation and see Israel's



future as predicated upon a negotiated settlement with all of its neighbors and a normalization of relations with the Arab world. It has been beset with two problems. First, the perceived dictates of security and terrorism and, second, the splintering of peace perspectives amongst a number of political parties and groups.

Whatever the merits and the demerits of Camp David, it has strengthened the peace forces who had always argued that a negotiated peace was the only road to peace and that it was possible to negotiate with the Arabs.

At the same time, the forces of the right have also been strengthened. This polarization may finally challenge Israelis and American Jews to make a clear choice on a political course for lasting peace.

What can be called the "peace community" encompasses Israelis in the most liberal segments of Israel's dominant Labor Party, Mapam, the small Citizen Rights Party and Sheli, Rakah (the Communist Party) and a few others, including the members of the National Religious Party who are associated with a group called *Oz v'Shalom* ("Strength and Peace").

To these political groups must be added a number of non-political groups of which Israel's Peace Now group is by far the largest. Reserve officers formed Peace Now in the belief that "Peace is greater than greater Israel." Their ability to turn out 100,000 in demonstrations has been a source of constant pressure on the government. Some of them are expected to leave the popular movement

to enter the political arena in the coming elections, perhaps in association with the previously ruling Labour coalition.

The issues that separate these groups are the shades of approach to the occupied territories, national self-determination for the Palestinians and dealing with the P.L.O. At one end of the spectrum is the now out-of-power Labour coalition, willing to give up most of the territories, accept a Palestinian-Jordanian State, and negotiate with "any Palestinian group" ready to recognize Israel and repudiate terrorism. At the other end are those who are prepared for immediate and direct negotiations with the P.L.O. over an independent Palestinian State in all of the occupied territories. Somewhere between 30 and 50 percent of Israelis fall within this viewpoint.

The strength of Israeli fears make it difficult for them to perceive the ability to take any bold initiative. They point to a seeming absence of any popular, public Palestinian movements equivalent to, say, Peace Now and come away dispirited, feeling that there is no voice for peace from the other side. One often hears, "If only the P.L.O. would give us a clear sign, something that would not be retracted the next day, then we could have something to work for, some leverage to change the policy of the government." These pleas are no doubt echoed from the "other side" by Palestinians who resent Israel's stated unwillingness to negotiate with the P.L.O. — except on a battlefield.

For all its vitality, Israel's ongoing debate loses much in translation to Jews in America. The gnawing questions in Israeli society receive little attention in the Jewish community and often in the American media. Many Israelis will not say the same thing in America as in Israel for fear it will be misunderstood or used against Israel.

American Jewish thinking has been a voluble echo for Israeli policy not so much out of agreement as out of fear to disagree. Supporting Israeli government policy has become the *modus vivendi* of American Jewish life. Whatever the merits, the Jewish community is now mired in an image of itself that makes any thinking appear to repudiate its past policies — a sign of weakness to non-Jews who have long been asked to give their complete support to Israel. It is due to this preoccupation with consistency, and thus credibility, that the Jewish community has acted — and often over-reacted — with dispatch towards dissenters.

Breira was the clearest example of this

## To the Government of Israel: A Call for an Initiative on the Palestinian Issue

Peace Now calls on the government of Israel to take the initiative in breaking the cycle of Israeli-Palestinian hostility and to further the cause of a permanent settlement of the Middle East conflict. Our proposal is based upon the belief that continued rule over a million and a half Arabs distorts the democratic and Jewish character of the State of Israel. It also impairs the realization of the principles of justice and morality upon which the Zionist vision is founded. The State of Israel has paid a dear price for peace with Egypt. Resolution of the Palestinian issue is the next step in the construction of peace. Failure to make progress on this question may jeopardize the stability of the peace treaty with Egypt.

The government of Israel should conduct negotiations with any Palestinian body which accepts the path of negotiation as the only means of solving the Middle Eastern conflict.

1. These negotiations will be guided by the following principles:

a. The Palestinians will recognize Israel's right to exist as a sovereign Jewish state within secure borders and will abandon the use of terror. For its part, Israel will recognize the right of the Palestinians to a national entity. The fulfillment of this right must not endanger Israel's security.

b. Both sides will conduct the negotiations in the firm belief that only through mutual compromise of political demands, based on the

historical rights of both peoples, can peace be brought to the area.

c. Israel will relinquish its basic claim to sovereignty over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and will be guided in its demands by security considerations alone. During the negotiations all settlement activities and legislative proceedings which impede the peace process will cease.

2. The Palestinian representatives will be accorded status equal to that of the representatives of all states participating in the resolution of the Palestinian problem and the problem of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

3. The autonomy proposed in the Camp David Accords constitutes a transitional stage on the way to a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This autonomy plan is linked to the construction of peace with Egypt and should be implemented in the areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

4. The negotiations between the parties participating in the peace process will be conducted on the basis of the Camp David Accords and Security Council Resolution 242. Israel will view the Palestinian issue as that of a people possessing national rights, and not as a refugee problem alone.

*"Peace Now: Peace is Greater than Greater Israel,"* Peace Now, October 1979.

## SHELI— Peace Camp of Israel Plan for Palestinian Self-Rule In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip

It is in Israel's interest to bring about the establishment of Palestinian self-government, taking into consideration the needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people. Therefore, Israel should hold talks with the representatives of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The structure of the Palestinian self-government should incorporate such electoral procedures and a system of political representation as to enable the Palestinian people, at the end of the transition period, to determine their own destiny in accordance with their legitimate rights and, above all, their right to self-determination and to establish an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

It is in Israel's interest to insure the independent Palestinian State, once established, will maintain normal peaceful relations with Israel. The achievement of this end necessitates mutual recognition of Israel and the P.L.O. Such mutual recognition will facilitate the participation of the P.L.O. in negotiations on the establishment of self-rule, its participation in the elec-

tions, and its role as a significant moderating factor in the self-governing authority during the transition period.

The authority of the self-governing body constituted by the elections will encompass all territory and all residents of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, irrespective of religion and nationality.

The authority of the self-governing body will extend to all lands and natural resources in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The self-governing authority of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will control matters of law and order, education, economy, internal security, urban and rural planning, industrial and agricultural development, and all public services.

All land expropriation will cease forthwith and no additional settlements will be established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Existing settlements will not be allowed to constitute an obstacle to peace.

SHELI—U.S.A. doesn't agree with those (Israeli or American citizens) who say that "the political struggle against

the government of Egypt must be limited within the state's borders."

The governments of Israel (Labor and Likud as well) traditionally mobilized the Jewish community of the U.S.A., trying to create the image of an "united front" of "Jewish solidarity."

We are convinced that such "solidarity" is false and that the true and just interests of the Jewish people, as well as those of the State of Israel and its citizens obliged us to voice our constructive objection.

Now is the time to conduct a political campaign against the anti-Zionist, anti-Jewish, anti-human, unjust and unjustified policy, carried out by the government of Israel.

SHELI-U.S.A. is ready to make itself known, in writing, and by sending its members to meet with individuals, groups, communities, Jewish and non-Jewish, to explain and advocate its political and national platform toward the Israeli-Arab, Israel-Palestinian co-existence in just peace; security and national sovereignty to all the people in the Middle East.

concern. A Jewish group organized by young Jewish intellectuals in 1974, Breira ("alternative") garnered widespread support from disaffected Jews, including the endorsement of several nationally prominent Jewish leaders. Despite that support, institutional Jewish pressure was intense, even though the pressure was not so much a criticism of Breira's policies as its willingness to state those policies publicly. Attacks mounted from the most conservative sectors of the Jewish community and continued within major organizations. The demise of Breira, after just three years of existence, had profound negative impact upon Jews exploring new alternatives. Since then, the prevailing attitude has been, "Better play it safe; remember what happened to Breira."

In Jewish eyes the "Christian problem" is a critical constraint to the prospects of more active Jewish dialogue. Jews would feel less vulnerable in public discussion without the fear that Christian commit-

ment to Israel is a function of the flow of oil, superceding guilt towards the developing world, and continuing antipathy. Whether that fear is a Jewish legacy of the holocaust, or Christian realities, it is a Jewish mind-set which Christians must learn to understand and communicate.

The election of Begin had an unsettling effect upon American Jews. His party, Herut (Freedom), has traditionally been the *bete noire* of Israeli parties, the anti-establishment right whose policies were abhorrent yet tolerated as an example of Israeli liberalism. Many Jews regarded his pro-violence position as antithetical to the establishment of a Jewish State. Begin's election and subsequent and astonishing peace with Sadat compounded the dilemma. In the face of the settlement policy, mounting economic woes and the flagging autonomy negotiations, liberal voices in the Jewish community are once more finding their balance along with issues on which to push.

The American media have betrayed Jewish confusion, reporting statements critical of Begin by major Jewish leadership and then, in the next breath, a denial or contradictory statement by the same leader. To some it sounds like the ambivalence Jews attribute to the P.L.O. What it amounts to is a sparring; not knowing whether to criticize the Prime Minister or Israel or to say something that may be picked up by Americans as a Jewish "abandonment" of Israel.

No one doubts that the clear majority of American Jews do not support the settlement policy of the Israeli government. While this was said to Begin and his cabinet during a recent visit of the Board of Governors of the American Jewish Committee, the Committee agreed not to make its sentiments publicly known (although it did make the decision known).

To try to compensate for flagging enthusiasm over the settlements, the Israeli government has turned to the more compelling argument that we must unite to

oppose the terrorism and communism inherent in the P.L.O. (See "A Rabbi Speaks Out.") While this is widely appealing, the principle of Palestinian self-determination is also gaining ground. There is increasing skepticism that a Jordanian state could constitute self-determination, although most Jews would argue that it is the P.L.O. that must take the initiative in the breakthrough for peace just as Sadat set a precedent.

Many Israeli and American Jews privately express the hope for measured American pressure as a means of untying this Gordian knot. They argue that both Jews and Arabs have painted themselves into what is, at least, a psychological corner. The United States, they reason, is at the fulcrum of regional diplomacy and American pressures would enable the Israeli government to accede to new demands, "blaming" the United States while going along. This likelihood however, is not a viable option until after our Presidential elections.

Americans, Christians and Jews are not waiting for startling new efforts to act. By the end of the year, the National Council of Churches will have a new and, no doubt, controversial Middle East policy statement. Within the Jewish community a new organization is forming called the Committee for a New Jewish Agenda. Carrying on in a similar spirit to Breira, it will deal with a broader range of issues and appears likely to move cautiously on the Middle East. The Shalom Network is a loose, working group involved solely with Middle East education. Both organizations encompass groups in more than 20 cities exploring new approaches to peace.

## A Rabbi Speaks Out

I suspect the development of this "Palestinian monster"—P.L.O., terrorism, etc.—is not unrelated to our refusal to recognize, as Jews, the suffering of these people. Even if it is not our fault—and we can't solve it alone—we should have cried out when we saw thousands of refugees suffering and said, "This is intolerable to Jews, whose own people know what it is to be refugees..."

The point I am making as I speak this: We as rabbis are abdicating our role. We are allowing the Jewish people to be led by the P.R. men and the politi-

cians. They lay out the programs and the lines, and we follow. This is a shocking betrayal. We rabbis have no right to bow out of this debate. The future of Jews and Judaism is at stake...

There is no question but that the American Jewish establishment had a hard line and refuses expression to dissenting views.

*Excerpts from a text of a talk under the above title, reproduced in Agenda, #3, published by Committee for a New Jewish Agenda.*

## American Jewish Leaders On Dialogue for Middle East Peace:

"The single most dangerous thing that can happen to Israel is the muting of dissent... The muting of dissent within the American Jewish community is causing more harm to Israel than its enemies."

*Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, former President of the American Jewish Congress, in Jewish Post, February 15, 1980.*

"The best way to achieve unity in the Jewish community is to put these questions on the table... The present Israeli cabinet is beyond the consensus within

the American Jewish community and maybe in Israel."

*Theodore Mann, President of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations at a conference in Montreal, November 1979; quoted in Jewish Currents, March 1980, p. 6.*

"There will never be peace until there is a rapprochement between Israel and the Palestinians."

*Rabbi Alex Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, in Time, April 14, 1980, p. 40.*

# Open Dialogue Will Aid The Struggle for Understanding

History has submitted Palestinian and Jew to different yet remarkably parallel experiences. Each has known persecution and oppression, diaspora, the struggle for identity and the temptation of national liberation. This shared experience may one day make reconciliation possible.

For the moment, however, the intense regard for security and survival makes it difficult for Jews to look beyond their preoccupation to the experiences of

other peoples or even to the long-range question of Jewish survival. This "Masada mentality"—that we must stand and, if we must, die—has permeated Jewish thinking.

It is in this context that the Jewish community has blinded itself to the Palestinian experience. This has taken two forms, the development of a picture of Palestinians that precludes a need to understand them. The other form is in a new association of Jews and Israel

with anti-communism. Each of these appeals are essentially Western, conservative values.

This new alignment of Jewish values has led to a major crisis in modern Jewish identity. For the first time, what is a "Jew" and a "Zionist" has become a function of what is perceived as being in the best interest of the State of Israel. The implicit "Jewish" position is that only American policy can save Israel, or at least buy enough time, and indeed,

that may not work.

The situation of the Palestinian people is not analogous at this point. They remain in their diaspora, *ghurba*—without rights, a nation, flag or passport. Their power is modest. Yet, as many Jews see it, their influence throughout the world with support from the Arab oil-producers will eventually give them an assurance which the State of Israel can never expect to have, even from the United States.

If this line of thinking is followed, the Middle East must one day yield to one of these two people. Many in the Jewish community vigorously reject either choice and have been working to build bridges to Arabs and to Christians. If all three join hands, a new reality could become possible.

Christian attitudes towards the Middle East conflict have traditionally been hesitant and confused. Some Christians have felt the need to side with the Palestinian people out of a feeling of solidarity due to the continuing oppression of Third World peoples at the hands of Western imperialism.

Other Christians have felt the need to side with the State of Israel out of a feeling of guilt towards the treatment of Jews at the hands of Christians. In part, this is reflected by the new "alliance" of Jewish conservatives with the fundamentalist evangelicals.

Still other Christians, perhaps most, have found it safer to abstain from the controversy lest they be criticized by their Jewish or Arab friends or even both. Virtually all work in interreligious affairs has required setting aside the Middle East as the price of interaction.

This relationship of Christians with Jews is dishonest and may prove to be harmful. There is no way modern Christian concern for the Jewish people can compensate for the tragedies of history. Nor should we demand that that burden be a price for our relationships. But Christians can and must accept Jews as equals. This may be the hardest demand of all: to ask that Christians speak sensitively, yet very directly and frankly to Jews in sharing their concerns for Israel and its future.

After three decades of conflict without dialogue, the Middle East has become an integral part of the future of our globe and all of the peoples within it. The Middle East is not merely a world issue—it is now the world issue. A full and open dialogue on the alternatives for peace in the Middle East is the greatest contribution we can make to the survival of Israel and the stability of our world.

## Steps Towards Peace in the Middle East

Sooner or later Israelis and Palestinians will propound a formula for ending the conflict in the Middle East. How much hardship will have to be endured until that time, how many lives will be lost are matters that, in large part, lie in the hands of our nation and its people. Although we will not make the peace, it is clear that we can help to make it possible: if we devote our energies less to the commas and phrases of a final treaty and more to initiating a process out of which peace will become meaningful. These steps may help as a guide in work with the Jewish community and with all Americans:

1. The Middle East conflict must be understood as a whole. It is more than the rights of one people or even two.
2. We must work for a dialogue among Arabs and Jews and extend it to all who know and love this land.
3. We must begin to challenge the many unspoken assumptions that prevent dialogue and make certain ideas the "property" of one side or the other.
4. A serious, scholarly effort is necessary to critically examine many of the key arguments and aspects of the conflict.
5. A greater effort must be made to hear those from other perspectives, particularly Israeli and Palestinian voices who have been working for peace.
6. We should look beyond the stereotyped Jewish and Arab images, which only confirm one's existing biases, and make a positive effort to overcome our own accumulated stereotypes and fears.
7. Cooperative projects involving Jews, Moslems and Christians working together on Middle East questions are needed.
8. We must be reconciled to experiencing controversy, anger and despair. A dialogue for peace will not emerge gently without trauma but through hard work.
9. We must look towards the future, to what can be done. In the words of the early Zionists, "If you will it, it is no dream."

## NOTES

1. *Keeping Posted*, November 1970, p. 5.
2. *The Many Faces of Anti-Semitism*, The American Jewish Committee, 1978 (rev.), p. 39.
3. Eliezer Berkovits, "Peace Now: A Response to My Critics," *Sh'ma*, March 7, 1980, p. 66.
4. *Jerusalem Post*, September 28, 1979, p. 3.
5. Stephan Rosenfeld, "Stormy Weather Ahead," *Present Tense*, Fall 1979, p. 21.
6. Arnold Foster and Benjamin Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), p. 324.
7. Marv Maurer, "I.F. Stone—Universalist," *Midstream*, February 1979, p. 12.
8. Judith Hershkopf Banki, *Anti-Israel Influence in American Churches*, (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1979), p. 1.
9. Ron Segal, *Whose Jerusalem*, p. 6.
10. Nat Hentoff, "Can Israel Survive as a Jewish State?," *The Village Voice*, December 19, 1980.
11. Benny Morris, "Chills and Kills," *Jerusalem Post*, March 14, 1980.
12. Harry Essrig and Abraham Segal, *Israel Today* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1977) p. 260.

## National Jewish Organizations Concerned With the Middle East

Organizing Committee for a  
New Jewish Agenda  
P.O. Box 320  
New York City, NY 10025

Jews concerned with the retreat from social action concerns and open discussion within the organized Jewish community. Seeks to apply Jewish values to such questions as economic justice, ecological concerns, energy policy, world hunger, intergroup relations and affirmative action, women's rights, peace in the Middle East, and Jewish education.

The Shalom Network  
434 Mercer Avenue  
River Edge, NJ 07661  
A national network linking American Jews actively committed to the existence of the State of Israel and self-determination for the Palestinian people.

The Jewish Peace Fellowship  
(affiliated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation)  
Box 271  
Nyack, NY 10960

Unites those who believe that Jewish ideals and experience provide inspiration for a non-violent philosophy of life. Promotes respect for humanity and confidence in its essential decency. In striving to eliminate the causes of war, the J.P.F. is also concerned with the advancement of freedom and justice for all people.

## Local Organizations Working in the Jewish Community

BCCAS (formerly Boston Committee to Combat Anti-Semitism)

54 Boylston Street  
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

A group of Jews and non-Jews dedicated to the elimination of anti-Semitism and the sharing of Jewish culture.

Breira—A Project of Concern in Diaspora-Israel Relations,

North Bay Chapter  
P.O. Box 475

Berkeley, CA 94701

This group has members from a wide range of the Jewish community, among them people from twenty to seventy, secularists and synagogue members, residents of San Francisco, Alameda and Marin County.

Bridge the Gap  
1637 Butler Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

This is a peace and human rights group which fosters a Jewish-Arab dialogue for a Middle East settlement, and also functions as a support group for a similar Israeli group called Partnership.

Chutzpah  
P.O. Box 60142  
Chicago, IL 60660

A seven-year-old group of radical Jews, Chutzpah is committed to socialism and positive Jewish identity. It publishes a quarterly newspaper (\$2.25 a year) and has also published a book called *Chutzpah: A Jewish Liberation Anthology*, available from them at \$5.95. They also engage in political action and have published a political principles handbook, also available to other groups.

Kadima  
Box 7, 2420 1st Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98121

Kadima, formed in Spring 1978, defines itself as a progressive Jewish organization committed to fighting anti-Semitism and all forms of repression and to achieving a just peace in the Middle East which recognizes the national rights of Israelis and Palestinians.

Jewish-Middle East Peace Project  
P.O. Box 60142  
Chicago, IL 60660

Sponsors speakers and educational forums in the Chicago area.

Other local groups are in Madison, Ann Arbor, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Atlanta. Most addresses are available through the Shalom Network.

## Draft Statement on the Middle East

Peace in the Middle East is essential to the survival of the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples.

Peace in this region has also become an imperative for world stability and peace. For the sake of these peoples and for the sake of the world, peace in the Middle East must be made possible.

Peace in the Middle East must begin with the two peoples who have shared this land for so many centuries: the Palestinians and the Israelis.

The only road to peace is in bringing together these two peoples to forge a settlement embodying the aspirations of each in a manner that is acceptable to the other. To shirk this task may easily prove disastrous for them and tragic for our world.

We believe that the United States can and must take new initiatives to bring together Palestinians and Israelis in negotiations that will produce a peace settlement for all of the parties to the conflict and encompass all of the outstanding issues.

To make this possible, American policy must be guided by these basic principles of reconciliation:

1. The Middle East conflict is fundamentally a conflict between two peoples, each with a claim to this land, each with a history of suffering at the hands of others.

2. Israel and the Palestinian people can only arrive at a meaningful peace by speaking through their current leadership; for Israel, this is the Government of Israel, and for the Palestinians, this is the Palestine Liberation Organization.

3. To provide for a credible (vital) peace process, Palestinians and Israelis must look beyond their historical grievances towards a new reality in which each recognizes the rights, aspirations and equality of the other.

4. The United States must do all in its power to discourage the Palestinians and Israel from any actions undermining the integrity of the peace process. This includes all acts of violence and terror, human rights violations and the settlement policy of the Israeli government.

5. The policy of the United States in attempting to "buy" peace through the massive infusion of arms is not in the interest of the United States or the peoples of the Middle East. Survival and peaceful stability require diplomacy focused on building a regional peace.

6. The United States must state clear policy goals and work actively for their attainment. The foremost goals are the assurance to Israelis and Palestinians of the mutual right to survival and national self-determination in a manner consonant with the integrity of each people.

7. The United States must encourage a domestic and international dialogue on all alternatives for Middle East peace. Our government has not done its best to promote dialogue among Palestinians and Americans including American Jews. Our government must remove visa restrictions and other impediments to dialogue towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

We believe the enormous challenge of the Middle East must be confronted by Americans. Our love for these two peoples demands our action to make peace possible, for both of them, together.

Peace in the Middle East will also be an important step toward dealing with the growing arms race, SALT, super-power confrontation, international violence, the grievances of the Third World, world energy, the American economy and the defusing of anti-Semitism, as well as the enhancement of Jewish-Christian-Islamic relations in the world.

We challenge our fellow Americans to join with us to help expand a national dialogue on all levels in order to make peace possible in the Middle East—for Jew, Moslem, Christian...and the world.

*Produced by the Middle East Peace Project, New York City.*

# Book Views

## Decision On Palestine

By *Evan M. Wilson*

Hoover Press, 1979, 244 pp., \$14.95.

Evan Wilson deserves a high grade on this book. It is logically organized, well-written, objective, well-documented and straight forward in its judgments and conclusions.

The period 1942 to 1948 was one of conflict between the Palestinian Arabs, the native majority who strongly opposed the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, and a Zionist-led movement, determined, regardless of the opposition, to bring such a state into existence. Today's American policy took form in this period.

Mr. Wilson served on the Palestine Desk of the State Department during most of this period. Wisely, he has not relied heavily on memory. Rather, he has used memory as a "divining rod" to lead him to factual records, many only recently made available as public documents of governments involved, the League of Nations and the United Nations.

A measure of the author's penetrating insight into the complex nature of Arab-

Israeli conflict is found in a summary document prepared by him and circulated to members of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on April 1, 1946. This statement, reproduced in full in the book, is noteworthy not only for its relevancy then but also for its relevancy today. Similar insight is contained in statements, quoted in the book, from key State Department officials, notably Loy Henderson. Offsetting this experienced counsel of the State Department was the effective work of pro-Zionist White House staff, such as David Niles and Clark Clifford, who had almost daily access to the President. Political strategy and manœuver were uppermost in the minds of the White House advisers. Mr. Wilson relates how Presidents Roosevelt and Truman reacted to such conflicting advice.

Early in the book Mr. Wilson poses several questions which he later attempts to answer. The reader will be interested in his conclusions about whether it was inevitable under the circumstances that United States policy from 1942-48 culminated in endorsement of a Jewish state in Palestine. While some readers may not agree with the author's conclu-

sions, all should find his analysis and reasoning intriguing.

The author also looks at the role played by the major oil companies during the period covered by the book, with final judgments at variance with public opinion and Zionist propaganda.

While repeated reference is made to government officials who did not share the White House view, there is no indication given of what their full policy would have been. Did men like Forrestal, Henderson, Lovett think alike? What more might they, and others, have done to press for adoption of their viewpoint at the White House? To what extent has time already proved that these men were right?

These questions do not imply that this book is deficient. It is not. Every author sets parameters for study and on the whole I think that Mr. Wilson has done this well.

*Decisions On Palestine* is a very timely publication because today we are reaping the harvest of seeds sown more than twenty-five years ago.

Reviewed by *John H. Davis*

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## My Home, My Prison

By *Raymonda Hawa Tawil*

Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1979, 265 pp.

\$12.95, hardcover.

Raymonda Hawa Tawil is a vivacious Palestinian woman who lives on the West Bank, under Israeli rule. An authentic voice of the Palestinians on the West Bank, she is a strong advocate of dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. Her autobiography skillfully blends the intensely personal with the strongly political, and interweaves a passionate nationalism with the cry of a strong-willed Arab woman seeking release from her society's confines.

Writing in the autumn of 1976, during a four-month house arrest in Ramallah, Raymonda muses: "Even when the (Israeli) authorities see fit to release me from house arrest, my regained 'freedom'

will have a bitter flavor. Like all Palestinians, I will bear my prison with me in my heart wherever I go. As a woman, I will suffer a double alienation." (p. 8)

*My Home, My Prison* traces Raymonda's life, from her troubled childhood in Galilee in the 1940's—when she experienced the two-fold pain of her parents' divorce and the separation of her family caused by the 1948 war—through her adolescence in Haifa, where she mixed with more sophisticated Jewish girls. After her abrupt move to Jordan in 1957, she found its social restrictions suffocating and tried to escape by marrying at eighteen and bearing five children in rapid succession. That escape also proved unsatisfying, and Raymonda searched for ways to develop and express herself through the Arab Women's Union, journalism, and the political and literary salon that she cultivated in her

home in Nablus.

Her descriptions of life under Israeli occupation mirror the changing moods on the West Bank. Raymonda expresses the shock and demoralization of occupation, and the impact of the Palestinian guerrillas: "All our sympathies lay with the guerrillas. They emerged at a time when our morale was low, when we had lost our self-respect." (p. 126) Later she describes the enthusiasm felt when Yasir Arafat spoke at the United Nations in 1974: "After years of hostility and indifference, the world acknowledged the existence of the Palestinian people, and recognized the P.L.O.! A wave of euphoria swept the West Bank, and in Nablus, too, the streets were filled with exultant young demonstrators." (p. 9) She remarks astutely that such demonstrations were led by high school students "who had grown up under occupation and could scarcely remember a  
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# Books to Order

## New Selections

- Evan M. Wilson, *Decision on Palestine*, Hoover Press, 244 pp. \$14.95. Well-documented analysis of the six years leading up to the creation of Israel. Based on author's personal experience and on information only recently made available by the United Nations and governments involved. See book review, p. 14. Our price, \$10.00
- Raymonda H. Tawil, *My Home, My Prison*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 265 pp. \$12.95. Autobiography of an Palestinian woman whose description of life under Israeli occupation mirrors the changing moods on the West Bank. See book review, p. 14. Our price, \$8.50.
- 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 the Middle East. Our price, \$3.60.
- Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, Croom Helm (London), 361 pp. \$24.95. Spells out Zionist views on 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. Forest, *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.
- Stephen D. Isaacs, *Jews and American Politics*, Doubleday & Co. 302 pp. An investigation into the role Jews play in American politics. It explodes many myths on this subject and shows how Jews have recognized and exerted the power they have. Our price, \$3.85.
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- Alfred Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection: What Price Peace?*, Dodd, Mead & Co. 800 pp. \$20.00. Covers the Arab-Israeli conflict from the time of Herzl to Camp David. It treats the subject from every angle. It is well-documented; the research involved is monumental. Contains much information of which Americans are mostly unaware. One authority has said that it should be read by every responsible citizen in the West. Our price, \$12.75.
- Cathy Mellett, *Perspectives on the State of Israel*, High Butte Books, 132 pp. \$5.95 (paperback). Statements of many different opinions on the creation of the State of Israel. Helpful for study groups and seminars. Our price, \$2.80.
- 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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(Continued from page 14)

time when we hadn't lived under Israeli military domination. Perhaps that was the precise reason why they found occupation all the more intolerable..." (p. 227)

Raymonda reflects the emotional ambivalence experienced by Palestinians when they began to realize that they could not regain all of their homeland. During her trip to the United States in 1974, she found that an American Jewish audience in Los Angeles could sympathize when she proposed the formation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, but she clashed with Palestinian Americans in San Francisco who rejected any compromise with Israel. Raymonda then reflected on her own attachment to her childhood home in Acre and her anger that the Israeli government would not let her return there, even to stay overnight: "What a searing injustice, what a painful humiliation! How could I consent to the partitioning of my homeland? But this belonged to the realm of feeling; this was a homeland as a state of mind, as a myth. In my rational mind, I knew that I had to view my homeland as a reality, as a feasible social and political entity where I and my fellow Palestinians would be masters of our own fate. However, painful the wrench, however outrageous the idea of shelving our claim to the whole of Palestine, the real interests of my people required me to accept a realistic solution capable of solving the painful and immediate problem." (p. 213)

### Dialogue With Israelis

Raymonda has worked courageously to open up a dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis. She has continued to believe that Israelis can understand the Palestinian plight, and has sought to prove to Palestinians that they should break through their "boycott mentality" toward Israelis. These inner and external struggles are evident throughout her autobiography. Raymonda asks herself: "How (can I) relate to an enemy as a human being? How to relate to a human being as an enemy?" (p. 148) She simultaneously praises the Palestinian guerrillas and rushes out in the street to help an injured Israeli soldier. She invites Israelis and foreigners to her home for endless political debates with Palestinian politicians and intellectuals. She feels vindicated when Israeli journalists and politicians come to a women's vigil in Nablus in 1968, because their presence shows "that not all Israelis support their government's policies in the West Bank and that, under appropriate cir-

cumstances, Israeli public opinion could be a valuable ally to our cause if we could break through the iron curtain of total noncommunication dividing us from the people of Israel." (p. 142) But she has moments of doubt as the occupation drags on, and she undergoes some shattering experiences, such as her emotional encounter with Israelis at the Hebrew University in the painful aftermath of the October War.

Raymonda's belief in the power of dialogue to break through barriers and lead to mutual respect is the most powerful theme in her autobiography. She recently acted on this belief by participating in a symposium in Washington, D.C., organized in October 1979 by the liberal Israeli magazine, *New Outlook*. Speaking for other Palestinians on the West Bank, Raymonda praised the Israeli peace movement and expressed her support for "a just and lasting peace with Israel on the basis of mutual recognition of national rights....For Palestinians, the recognition and acceptance of Israel's existence as well as its security are irrevocably linked to the emergence of a Palestinian homeland in which Palestinian aspirations to the fundamental human rights of political, social and economic freedom can be exercised." (*New Outlook*, November/December 1979, p. 24.)

Those of us who know Raymonda will admire the candor with which she expresses her feelings and her inner dilemmas in this human and passionate account.

Reviewed by Ann M. Lesch

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*The Link* aims at maintaining contacts among Americans who believe that friendship with the people of the Middle East is essential to world peace, who would contribute to this goal by spreading understanding of the history, values, religions, culture and economic conditions of the Middle East, and who would—in this context—press for greater fairness, consistency and integrity in U.S. policy toward that area.

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