

The Link

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About This Issue

Tom Hayes has been there: up against the Israeli military in Palestine and pro-Israel militants in the U.S.

Write about it, we asked him, after viewing his documentary film. And he did. 21,000 words. Only problem was, our limit is 10,000. But the words were so revealing we hated to drop any. So we broke a 30-year tradition and added eight pages to this issue, happy in the knowledge that his feature article, if not his film, will appear uncut.

Speaking of censorship, *The Link* applauds the Fairfield (CT) University Library for its courageous stand against the cowardly censor who, three times now, has stolen all of our *Links* from the library. A statement by the Library Committee is reprinted on page 24.

Going there, as Tom Hayes would attest, is the best way to grasp the evil that Israel is committing with our tax dollars. Sabeel, an ecumenical Palestinian Theology Center, invites Americans to attend its third international conference this coming February. For details, see page 21.

Tom Hayes's documentary video, along with our complete book selection, is found on pages 22-23.

—John Mahoney

'People and the Land' Coming to a PBS Station Near You?

BY TOM HAYES

"Are there really goblins Daddy? Reelee?" It's already dark in her room. Four, going on five, she's got a tight grip on my hand, suspecting the answer might be scary. Still in reentry from a couple of months filming in Occupied Palestine, it's taking me a long time to answer.

Lying here with three tons of hot night on my back in Jenin. Hell-bound Palestinian mosquitoes are relentlessly trying to carry me away. Slapping noises from the other guys' rooms indicate a multi-pronged attack. The crew and I are staying in a house almost directly across the road from an Israeli military camp.



Israeli Defense Forces and Palestinian Women, near Ramallah, Occupied West Bank. — Photo by George Azar.

The reason I am awake is not so much the mosquitoes or the heat.

Screams periodically rip through the barbed wire of the camp across the road.

Jenin is a good-sized market town in the northern West Bank. Sweeping down steep slopes leading to an open plain, it is densely lived in, picturesquely compact. Roman aqueducts, occupation, Marlboros. Jenin was slugging it out with the Israeli occupation.

The screams, a man's screams, come about every 5 minutes. Sometimes closer. He sounds like a large man, the low pitch the screams start with as they uncoil into the darkness of my room.

Co-producer Riad Bahhur and I had traveled up from our base in Jerusalem on a fair bet that Jenin would be the scene of demonstrations the next morning. It would be the anniversary of the Sabra/Shatilla massacre in Israeli-occupied Beirut—and the anniversary of the signing of the Camp David sellout as well. What a stunning coincidence that the massacre took place on the same date as the Camp David signing.

There were the screams themselves—and then the reaction of Jenin's dogs—that

(Continued on page 2)

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gnawed against my sleep. With each scream that rose from the Army camp, dogs in the neighborhood began baying, and as they bayed, dogs farther away would pick up the cry, then dogs farther yet. The alarm expanded up the slopes of Jenin like waves hitting a reef. A terrible sound: grief and empathy, warning and dread.

Inside the wire there was no sound of empathy all that long scorching night.

Years later I'm sitting in the studio of Detroit's PBS station doing a program that will immediately follow the broadcast of *People and the Land*. The follow-up will be a half-hour program to—what, calm people down? “update” the one-hour program? I gather from the moderator's tone that the real intent is to denigrate my journalistic style. I'm doing my level best to be polite.

A member of the station's board, who is also associated with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), threatened to resign when his opposition to the broadcast was overridden. Detroit was something like the fifteenth (of 283 PBS affiliate stations) to broadcast *People and the Land*.

The broadcast of *People* in Miami seemed to take the ADL by surprise. Maybe the program director failed to solicit ADL's approval. Abraham Foxman, ADL's National Director, issued a press release condemning *People and the Land* and howling outrage at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for letting it get funded in the first place. The Detroit Jewish press called me an “amateur filmmaker with a history of anti-Israeli films.”

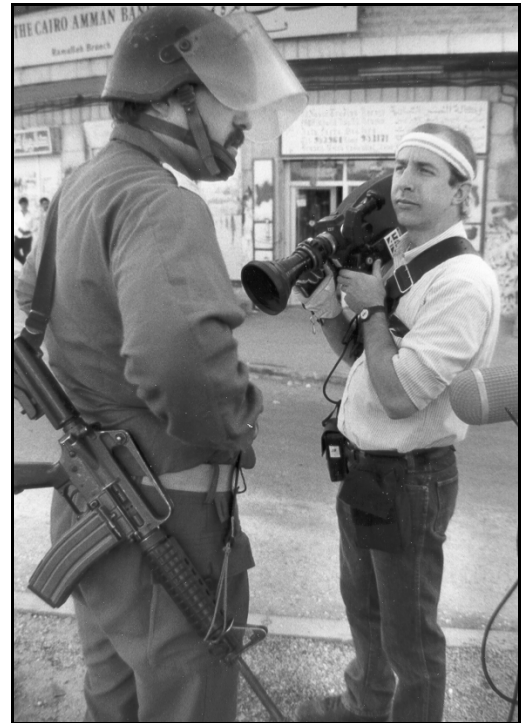
Well you might ask how in God's name I got my leg caught in this thing.

In the late 70s I made a film about displaced Indochinese people who were eventually resettled in the United States. The documentary followed a single family, the Nouts, starting with their life in the camp and staying with them through their first year in the United States.

My arrival in Thailand coincided with artillery attacks by the Vietnamese Occupation Army in Cambodia against the camps on the Thai side of the border. Khmer Rouge resistance fighters were thought to be stashing their weapons and

going into refugee camps where food and medical care were available on a sort of “non-denominational” basis. The fighters would get patched up and fed, then go back into Cambodia and kill Vietnamese soldiers. The Vietnamese Army expressed its displeasure with 122 mm. shells.

Refugee camps are purposely impermanent constructions—places to drain off humanity into the sky. There is no safe place to hide but sewage-filled trenches when high explosives come screaming in. More than half the population of any refugee camp on the planet is children. You connect the dots—refugee camps, artillery, and children—the results are utterly and ruthlessly predictable. That trip left an



Author filming in Ramallah, 1989.—Photo by Dorothy Thigpen.

impression like a tattoo on my neocortex.

The resulting film, *Refugee Road*, was broadcast nationally on PBS. It was picked up again by WNET, the New York City PBS affiliate, for a series on immigrants that was broadcast during the rededication of the Statue of Liberty. Never once, in all the screenings of *Refugee Road* I attended, was the term “balance” ever mentioned.

Six months after *Refugee Road* was released Kamphong Nout, the protagonist, died in agony of complications from surgery.

My family and the Nout family had over time melded as one. Kamphong's death here in the States, after the hell he and his family had already endured, overwhelmed me. I decided filmmaking was a worthless waste of time. I began picking up courses at Ohio State, prerequisites for medical school I had missed as an undergrad. I suppose it was the helplessness I had felt in the face of Kamphong's pain.

I was supporting myself working freelance on commercials and industrial films, doing school part time. I remember quite clearly the morning I stepped into that black hole marked Palestine. It's funny how the pivotal moments of our lives are so innocuous, so little preparatory fanfare. I'm having a cup of coffee before class, two newspapers before me—*The New York Times* and *The Columbus Dispatch*. I read a story in the *Times* that goes something like this, "Israel launches air strike against guerrilla stronghold in southern Lebanon, 6 dead."

I didn't think much of it. There wasn't much of it—an inch of copy. I'd seen hundreds of nearly identical inch-long stories without blinking. I reach for the *Dispatch*: "Israel launches air strike against Rashidiyya, a Palestinian guerrilla stronghold in southern Lebanon." And I look up. Just across the dining room table I've tacked up a map of all the refugee camps.

And I'm looking right at the word Rashidiyya with a little symbol that says it's a refugee camp. My mind travels at the speed of light back to the Cambodian border, and I'm confused. Israel—the Israel I was so smugly sure of—would never bomb a refugee camp. I know from bombing refugee camps. The shining city on the hill simply wouldn't do that. And I seemed to sense the camouflage that the term "guerrilla stronghold" provided to the act of bombing men, women and children in a refugee camp. I became very curious about who these Palestinians were and how they happened to be in refugee camps and why was the English language evading these journalists?

So I read everything I could get my hands on, from Menachem Begin to Fawaz Turki. I sought out Palestinians and talked to them about what I'd read and about their lives. If you know anyone who's doing that—informing themselves on this issue, and talking to actual Palestinians—warn them: ROAD CLOSED, PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK. Knowledge may very well be power; I have bet my life on that premise. But ignorance may provide a better night's sleep.

Sleep escaped me all through that long night of screaming in Jenin. It was over breakfast a couple of hours later that the shooting started. I'd heard shooting before. I learned the basic rhythm of heavy artillery in Thailand: whump, wait, sweat, slam. It's peculiar how your threshold of terror rises, and amazing how quickly it can fall. That's where all that reading and talking to actual Palestinians will land you.

The more I had read, the weirder the world seemed to have gotten. Strange stuff about displaced people not being

allowed to return to their homes, two-tier legal systems, international law being used as toilet paper.

The more I dug up, the more peculiar I found the stories that came out of the public (NPR/PBS) and corporate media—as though a huge crevasse had swallowed all reality relating to Palestine.

Palestine was not alone in that respect. In 1981 there wasn't a serious national dialogue on South African apartheid either. This reality gap—and I've met lots of Palestine veterans who have experienced the sensation—is a constant irritation. Like all your underwear is too tight. You can't pick up a paper, or watch the news without the deformity of language hitting you in the face. An Orwellian soiree: war is peace, "occupation" tethered to "benign," state terrorism cloaked in "security."

While I was working on *Refugee Road* I had a long look at how selfless individual Americans could be when they knew the truth. Three quarters of a million people were resettled, in a volunteer effort, from those terrible camps to America. It was something.

And why? Because Americans met those folks through their televisions, and they heard their stories and saw their living conditions. Other issues aside, my people had reached out and at least ameliorated a human catastrophe.

That was the context that brought me to consider producing a documentary about the situation of Palestinian refugees. It was really two decisions.

I wasn't just setting out to clue up Americans who I had faith would respond when they had information on the human side of these issues. I was also setting out to test the hypothesis that there was some kind of too-tight tourniquet on information about the Palestinian experience. Don't get me wrong, I was still incredibly naive in 1981 about the power I was poking at.

During the fund-raising period of that project (released as *Native Sons: Palestinians in Exile*) I had my first encounter with what I have come to think of as The Information Blockade—yes capitalized, definitely.

I was a credible applicant, having had *Refugee Road* broadcast nationally. As difficulties arose in raising funds to film in Lebanon, I talked extensively with PBS about their strictures on funding from what they like to call "sources with a direct interest in the topic." To PBS, the more "controversial" the content of a program, the more inadmissible funding from "sources with a direct interest in the topic." Of course what constitutes "controversial" is a wholly subjective and fundamentally political judgment.

A program on Indochinese refugees was not "controversial" because it was positive on government-endorsed resettlement. I intended to approach a program on the Palestinian refugee experience in the same way I had approached *Refugee Road*—portraits of individuals' lives. But this was seen as controversial. Same filmmaker, same human issues. Different ethnic group, different definition.

PBS's tolerance of funding sources with a "direct

interest" is applied on a sliding scale. For example if you watch "This Old House" you may see an Owens/Corning funding credit. Oddly enough the logo on insulation going into the walls of that old house has the funder's name on it. You couldn't fantasize a funder with a more direct interest in the program.

PBS let me know that funding for *Native Sons* from any organization with even a peripheral "interest" in the topic would "taint" such a "controversial" program.

This sliding scale at PBS sounds like good policy for "protecting" the viewer, but in fact it narrows the diversity of viewpoints. The problem is that information on some issues, like Palestinian human rights, has been so systematically distorted that virtually no funder without a direct interest is going to touch it.

Jo Franklin-Trout was publicly crucified for allegedly accepting "tainted funding" when she brought her program on the *intifada*, *Days of Rage*, to PBS. Fortunately she had a prior commitment to air from PBS, which felt compelled to begin the program with a graphic detailing the allegations against her.

It took two years to generate enough "clean" funding (spell that n-o-n-A-r-a-b) to go into production on *Native Sons*. Most of the grants were from the Ohio Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. Hoorah for peer panel review. UNRWA was providing some logistical support and I had borrowed heavily against our home to make up the balance of the budget.

With nine months of colloquial Arabic study under my belt, I took off for Lebanon, to be followed in two weeks by the soundman and the rest of the equipment. It seems crazy in retrospect. I didn't have any real contacts, had never visited the country before. Six people had died in shelling at the Beirut airport the day before I flew into it.

Like many non-Palestinians I've met who do solidarity work for Palestinian human rights (they're a kind of Abe Lincoln Brigade, *ala* Spain), there is a sense that history will not allow you to walk away; that once the lights go on you bear a responsibility to yourself and your fellow beings to do the work. Doesn't mean you're not afraid, you just have to swallow it. Gandhi articulated the issue perfectly: "When you know the truth, the truth makes you a soldier."

That aside, the Palestinian camps in Lebanon were a soul-crushing experience. Maybe it was the proximity to artillery impacts, or that smell that would come out of the ground in Shatilla Camp on hot days. The thousand awful things. . . it's not always the big things that chew your brain.

"It's okay, it's going to be okay, honey." My wife is shaking me, trying to bring me up. I've been yelling in my sleep again. Sitting up in bed I'm trembling, sweat dripping off my elbows. For nearly a year after returning I was having a recurrent nightmare of an experience in Beirut, altered slightly to include members of my family.

Late August 1983. The Lebanese Army is randomly shelling West Beirut to put the Amal militia back in its

place. The morning started with a small arms battle around the apartment building where John McClintock (the other half of the crew) and I are staying. We're sitting behind equipment cases stacked in front of the windows to keep flying glass out of our bodies.

There's the thump of the artillery piece sending a shell our way. "Three," pause, "two," long pull on a cigarette, we count the shell down. The sound of ripping air then a tremendous explosion in an upper floor of a building two doors away. There are the initial startled screams that follow every close hit and then another sound starts.

"UmmiUmmiUmmi!" – "MommyMommyMommy!" Hysterical cries of two young children erupt from the wrecked apartment. It's very close. We can hear that they are young, probably preschoolers. They don't stop crying and calling for their mother. They just don't stop.

There seems to be a lull in the shelling and I resolve to go over, hoping there's something I can do. There must be something. The pain and terror in the children's cries, the not knowing. Are they trapped in the rubble? Is their mother?

I never made the 50 feet to the door of their building. Walking into the street I see another man up at the corner. Two thumps from the artillery pieces. We glance toward each other, a momentary exchange, a look that says "what do we do now?" He ducks around the corner. I jump for the cover of some parked cars. The first shell hits at the corner killing him.

The second shell explodes behind me, the shock wave seeming to hammer the dust in the air straight through my skin. Shrapnel holes the cars. Gasoline pours from ruptured gas tanks into the gutter and ignites. Cars are exploding one after the other, chasing the burning gas, coming toward me like giant footsteps. I run. Not knowing where I'm going, not knowing that I'm running.

Past the corner, he's lying there, a wet mess in the rubble of the street. Some people are trying to drag him out of the street. More thumps from the guns. Someone is yelling at me "two-by-two, they're sending them in two-by-two!" People peering out windows duck for cover. Everyone scatters and I run faster.

Finally I'm pulled off the street and into a basement by some Nigerian students who press cigarettes and bottled water on me. Completely lost in the city, it takes me a long time to quit shaking.

It was that man's last look, and that corner, and the cries of those children that came clawing into my dreams night after night when I got back to the States. It would be my brother on that corner, or my mom in that apartment. I was afraid of sleep for a while. It took about a year for me to be comfortable back here in Disneyland, to quit flinching when doors slammed behind me. To quit wanting to strangle Americans who whined to me about their "problems" – the landlord, their shitty job, a big cable bill. I live in wonder at my freedom and the modest comfort of

my life. The absence of artillery, or automatic weapons fire, having a real roof, being able to work to feed my family. They're not little things.

One of the families that I filmed in Lebanon lived in Rashidiyya camp. It was, after all, news about that camp that had beckoned me to the topic in the first place. Abu Hussein's family had one son studying in the U.S. and the rest of the family was working to keep him in school.

The Israeli Army occupied Rashidiyya at that time, so the family went to pains to hide John and me when foot patrols came through.

One day Yehyah, one of the older sons, took John and me for a walk. We passed some flattened PLO sentry posts and made our way to a great stone-walled pool that some previous occupier had left behind centuries before. It still held water. As we tight rope walked the stones along the edge of the reservoir, Yehyah began explaining his life to me.

He couldn't work because he was Palestinian, not Lebanese. He couldn't own property for the same reason. He couldn't go to school in Beirut because he wouldn't make it past the Israeli and Phalange checkpoints. At that point even leaving the country was impossible. As a young Palestinian male, he wouldn't survive a trip to Beirut or Damascus. His life was stuck like a bug in amber, legally null-and-void.

Rashidiyya Camp was my point of entry into the Palestinian culture of the Exile—the Catastrophe—and a stereotype shatterer as well.

One night when I was there, nearly a dozen high-school-age Palestinians broke curfew and dodged the Israeli foot patrols so they could sit with John and me and discuss questions from their English literature text. It seems absurd to tell, but those kids were so intent on their education that they risked beatings and bullets to quiz "native speakers." The boys sat on one side of the vine-covered courtyard, the girls on the other. Munching fresh grapes, we mulled over their questions. Such serious questions, such pointed interest in the nuance of language. Oh, that my own children may become such careful stewards of their minds.

Prior to Lebanon I had never encountered Palestinian hospitality. My Arabic teacher had insisted I learn how to eat, and drink, and about basic manners, but the idea of a culture of hospitality had evaded me.

Yehyah's family was large, thirteen children in the house, and keeping all those tummies full was no small task for his father, Abu Hussein. Yet the day John and I wrapped up the filming with them, the family cooked up one of their five chickens, a good layer, in our honor. I felt terrible. Here they were in this dread situation blowing their limited resources on a couple of pampered Americans. Well, it really was their pleasure so we all enjoyed it.

There have been so many experiences like that over the years that accepting hospitality became, by necessity, part of the production schedule: "first we'll have coffee, then film a

little. Then we'll have juice, and film a little. Then we'll turn off the camera and just talk through a carton or so of smokes. Then dinner. So we can't travel tonight."

Once while filming in Deheisha Camp during the *intifada*, Dorothy Thigpen, assistant cameraperson on that trip, commented that the tray our juice had been served on was lovely. The next thing she knew the tray was being handed to her. "We want you to have it. No, we insist!" Dorothy was mortified at the time, but she has that tray today. There was no escape without it.

One day we dragged our equipment to the edge of a wind blown precipice that gave a good angle on the newly built *Wadi Naar* (Valley of Fire) road. Israel cut the road to route non-chosen humans around Jerusalem. It plunges into a desert valley so steep and menacing that I wouldn't drive it without a parachute. If your brakes go you'll be airborne.

We'd been standing on this lonely ridge filming the cars and taxis struggling up and down that roller coaster road for half an hour when a young boy appeared, tromping over a distant rise with a tray of hot coffee (little cups, lots of cardamom—sensational) and a pack of smokes. For us. Out of thin air. Like some great hospitality genie dropped him from the sky. We had to laugh . . . and drink coffee, and share a smoke.

It is such an important lesson, experiencing Palestinian hospitality, one of those "facts on the ground" that anyone can test. And when you've tested it then you're really confronted with the steepness of the slant in American media, the depth of the cultural slander. I am, after all, a member of the community directly responsible for their oppression. Those gracious expressions of acceptance I experienced somehow make the whole situation even sadder—that this culture of all cultures should be singled out for the role of demon.

Within the Occupied Territories there is a broad sense among Palestinians that the most powerful weapon in their hands is the truth. The camera was not only welcome, but people would take considerable personal risk to make sure we got out with our film.

It is the morning after the night of the screaming in Jenin. Riad, John and I are having coffee on the front porch when we hear that characteristic crackle of M-16 fire. It sounds like someone slapping two-by-fours together, not at all the throaty thud of a Kalishnakov.

It wasn't long before a neighbor woman came up the front walk shaking with sobs. She told us that a neighborhood boy, Imad Arqawi, had been killed by Israeli troops. Several other people were badly wounded.

A Palestinian journalist drove up and asked if we wanted to go over to the clinic, or up to Imad's house. We opted for Imad's house in Jenin Camp. By this time burning tires are pushing black fingers into the sky all over Jenin.

There was no question we were at the right house as we unloaded our equipment. All the neighbor ladies had come

to be with Imad's mother. The collective grief that poured from that courtyard was a sound from hell.

In Islam, as in Judaism, it is customary to bury the dead the same day they die, and martyrs are buried in the clothing they were wearing when they were killed. The Israeli Army, in its role of harasser of things non-Jewish, regularly confiscates the bodies of martyrs for a few days and performs unauthorized autopsies to prevent the observance of this religious custom.

We followed Imad's family to the cemetery, a bowl-shaped field to the east of the camp. It looked like all of Jenin was involved—crowds numbering in the hundreds, chanting for freedom and liberation, pouring down the roads and paths leading to the cemetery.

Imad lay beneath a Palestinian flag in the center of the field, his friends and family kneeling beside him, saying goodbye. The townspeople gathered, surrounding them like a great protecting wall. Neighbor ladies escorted his mother to the shade of an olive tree. One of the women cried out to Umm Imad, "All the boys in Palestine are your sons now." It was then that I started to cry. The waste of that young life. Never to marry, never to share grandchildren with his parents, never to have lived free for even an instant of his life. His mother held an olive branch in her hand. An olive branch!

The distance between a news item "One Palestinian Killed" and the human meaning of the murder is such a terrible unbridgeable distance.

There was a feeling I couldn't shake at that funeral that made me recall tales I had heard of slave funerals in the old South. Imad was free at last, safe beyond the oppressors' long reach.

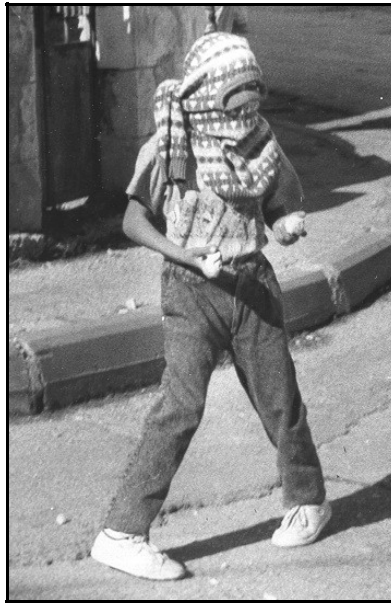
We had gone down through the crowd to where Imad's body lay. As non-Arabs, we were instantly identified with the occupation. Some people directed their rage at us, but others came forward to lead us to where Imad rested.

I'm not unaware of the ghoulish reputation that "the media" have. "If it bleeds it leads." But frankly I was so sick of listening to denials of the violence against Palestinians—the so-called "benign occupation"—that I felt compelled to film what we were seeing. Imad had a bullet hole just at the base of his throat, and another about four inches away near his left armpit.

As I bent close to that young body there was a smell. Not the smell of death, he had only been dead an hour or so. It was a strange sweet smell, like a baby's smell. I kept smelling that smell for a long time afterwards, like it was fastened to me. Even months later it would just appear in my nose.

We shot all the film we had brought with us. Boys we'd never met, friends of Imad, urged us to get the hell out of there because the Army was going to be attracted to such a large gathering. They held a quick logistical discussion.

One group took off to scout the road. There was no telling which direction or directions the Army would come from. The boys were absolutely intent that we not lose our film to the Israelis. We followed in a second car a half mile behind. The cemetery was actually no more than a quarter mile from where we were staying, but we took a long circuitous route back to the house. When we got there, the boys asked us for the film and took off through back yards. The footage wound up buried in a garden for two weeks before we could get back to retrieve it.



Rock-thrower, Beit Sahour, 1989.—
Photo by Dorothy Thigpen.

Then we heard automatic weapons fire from the direction of the cemetery. Usually you hear a burst or two, then it's over. This shooting didn't stop. The Army had come to seize Imad's body. I loaded audiotape into the deck and started recording. As I was trying to describe the sounds coming from the distance, I couldn't shake the image of Imad's mother, sitting under that tree, all those other Palestinian mothers gathered around her. Even in death, Imad was pursued. Even in her grief, his mother endured another assault.

What kind of people shoot into crowds at a funeral? What manner of human being? Murdering Imad wasn't satisfying enough? They had to terrorize his family and friends during the funeral?

The unarmed crowd succeeded in holding off the soldiers long enough for Imad to be buried. Another boy, 13, died as a result of chest wounds incurred in the attack. More

than a dozen Palestinians were seriously wounded.

Tell me those fairy tales of "Israeli democracy." I'll be looking at you like you just escaped from a mental hospital. Tell me about that shining city on the hill.

Tell me I don't have a balanced viewpoint.

Then balance for me the Khmer Rouge tale with the refugees' tale. I didn't give the Khmer Rouge any face time at all in *Refugee Road*. Not one second. Yet in the 50 plus screenings of *Refugee Road* I attended no one ever whispered the word "balance."

Balance me apartheid, or the Cheyenne, or the Japanese-Americans' experience during World War II, the slave's tale with the slave owner's.

Truth exists beyond balance. It is "justice" that is associated with balance, as in "the scales of." The sound of those high-powered assault rifles being used against a funeral crowd, recorded on my tape, is truth that nothing is going to balance.

The salient question is How Is Such Distorted

Mythology Perpetuated?

People and the Land addresses two forms of information control vis-a-vis the human rights situation in Palestine. In fact there are really four distinct pinch points on information before it hits the breakfast table: Funding, filming, getting the footage out of Israel, and dissemination.

The amount of money required for a broadcast quality media production is staggering. It can take years to mount a project and funding may be needed from any number of sources to fill in the fiscal recipe. Probably 80 percent of an independent filmmaker's time is spent hacking out proposals. When you finally go into production it's like being released from a cage.

On *People and the Land* Riad and I were fortunate to get the nod from the Independent Television Service (ITVS). Congress mandated the creation of ITVS through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to serve under-served minorities and increase programming diversity on PBS.

The total annual budget for ITVS is equivalent to six hours of aid to Israel, or three 30-second Super Bowl commercials. ITVS provides full funding for productions precisely to accommodate PBS funding "concerns."

That makes the process sound so simple: one grant, full funding, out the door. It's anything but simple. It took two years to raise enough money to go into production on *Native Sons*. Five years on *People and the Land*.

Generally you only get one opportunity per year on a specific grant, an annual panel meeting. You can go through whole years turning out nothing but bad paper, the grant-writing days and weeks like pieces of your life sucked into the word processor, then spit into oblivion. A little frustrating. ITVS receives in excess of 2,000 proposals a year. If 20 get funded it's a good year.

Our relationship with ITVS began stormy in 1991, and continues so to this day.

It was July 1991 when ITVS called. They had just completed their first grant panel meeting and the entire film community was holding its collective breath, each of us praying that the project that was consuming each of us was going to be recommended for funding. I had trouble controlling bodily fluids when I was told that our project had been selected. The next sentence that came scratching out of the phone dropped a sinker in my stomach: "We have some questions."

When you have spent a few years doing information work on Palestine, the sound of a qualifying remark from a grant administrator is an icicle to the heart.

"Some questions" from ITVS staff, mostly in the person of John Schott, then Executive Director, turned into 18 months of battling to keep the grant. Multi-page lists of questions streamed in from their offices in Minneapolis. The paper interrogation boiled down to "where did you get every penny that went into shooting the sample work submitted for this grant?" ITVS burrowed through the project records, mining for a justification to kill the funding.

The lasting mental image I have from that 18 months is of my feet pacing my office night after night, trying to figure out how ITVS could pull such a stunt, scoping the next move in that slow chess game.

There was plenty of time for soul-searching. For me, work on Palestine was a test of the relevance of independent filmmaking. If you couldn't get funding and dissemination for work about super-power culpability in cultural genocide, then what exactly was the point of independent filmmaking? Entertainment? Media titillation?

I'm not interested in entertainment nor am I interested in the programming philosophy embedded in most PBS shows: "If it's dead, shoot it." PBS runs lots of interesting documentaries, nearly all of them about dead people, dead artists, and dead issues. Their one current affairs documentary series, Front Line, is squeezed through the corporate filter of WGBH in Boston, a single Executive Producer exercising final cut on the entire series. Not a recipe for diversity in the market place of ideas.

According to the ITVS grant panel, what I had brought to the table fit its congressional mandate of providing diversity and serving an under-served audience.

It is worth noting that PBS, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and ITVS, were looking at reauthorization hearings on Capitol Hill within the year. What John Schott described as "administrative diligence" appeared to me like a monster cop-out, an attempt to protect ITVS funding by not having to defend a Palestine project before Congress.

At one point I was told that the project had been disqualified because a Palestinian-American community organization had provided plane tickets and lodgings in Palestine for production trips funded by the Ohio Arts Council. Schott defined that as support from an organization with a direct interest in the topic. "I'd really like to see this project funded but those are the PBS rules, we can't do anything about it."

Ironically, at the very same time, the Ohio Arts Council was saying that it was going to reduce the final payment on one of our grants because we had not generated adequate matching funds. Their justification was that the travel assistance we had received had no monetary value—the same travel assistance ITVS was defining as having a monetary value that disqualified the project.

Schott's "administrative diligence" with the project was the source of ongoing discussion and division on the ITVS board. At one point, Jackie Shearer, a member of the founding ITVS board, threatened to resign over the affair. She had herself come under the Zionist swatter when she produced a human interest story for a Boston station about Palestinians in America. Jackie knew precisely what was going on.

In December 1992 she became president of the ITVS board. Four months later the pre-production payment for *People and the Land* arrived from ITVS. Jackie Shearer died

of a chronic illness some months later. Without her dedication to the principles of diversity and artistic freedom *People and the Land* would not exist.

With funding in hand, we were ready to film in Occupied Palestine. You learn quickly that cameras are not wanted. It's completely understandable. If you were committing war crimes would you want camera crews following you around? Israeli antagonism to foreign camera crews is justified on the premise that the entire world is anti-Semitic and therefore only Israelis should be making images for export of the Jewish State in action.

The media obstacle course begins long before entering Israel. The geography of this maze says a lot about the "why" of prevailing Mideast mythology. It starts with domestic issues: equipment, and a document called a carnet.

Once a project is funded, you rent the production equipment. Of course renting anything from a car to a camera is going to require either proof of insurance, or the renter himself will sell you the insurance. But "all-risk" insurance is not available for media equipment that is going to be used under Israeli jurisdiction. I don't know why exactly, but it may have to do with Israeli guys with machine guns taking and breaking crews' camera gear. Not even Lloyd's of London would write insurance against confiscation on equipment going into Israel.

The impact of this insurance problem is a financial bullet big enough to stop a project. Since no one is going to rent you equipment, you have to buy it. This is an expense on the order of buying a house. In light of the kind of resources this equipment consumes, I am very fortunate that my wife and family have been supportive of this work. The lack of insurance means that if the equipment is seized or damaged by the Army you're looking at financial devastation.

Getting the film, the crew, and the equipment into Israel is another ball of worms. The carnet is sort of a passport for the equipment. It makes possible the duty free import/export of the gear. In addition to the carnet, Israel requires a deposit on entry equal to the full value of the equipment you're bringing in. We're talking in excess of \$40,000. At that time there were only three countries in the world that demanded a 100 percent deposit on media equipment: South Korea, South Africa, and Israel

I had a history of unsullied carnet use so I was able to secure a surety bond for considerably less than \$40,000. Still it's not hard to see how these two issues, carnet and insurance, can limit attempts by independents to document the situation in the Occupied Territories.

Then you have to get through Ben Gurion airport. A word to the wise: treat your entrance onto the plane for Tel Aviv as entry into an Israeli military base. Don't discuss your purpose with your crew or anyone else. Just watch the movie and keep your mouth shut.

For a trip in 1989 we had secured letters from the Governor of Ohio and Senator John Glenn stating that we

were producing a film for PBS and to please extend all normal journalistic courtesies and clearances to the crew. At some point in the flight Dorothy Thigpen, Riad Bahhur and I checked over the contents of the Letters Envelope. Each of us had a full set of originals. When we got into Tel Aviv the three of us were immediately escorted to the "Welcome To Israel" wing (otherwise known as the Arab Room) where we were taken to separate interrogation rooms. The first thing out of my interrogator's mouth was "let's see the letters."

The management of Interrogations-Are-Us concentrated on Dorothy, the assistant cameraperson. "Who are their contacts?" "Who's helping?" "What did they tell you about where they'll be filming?" She enjoyed their company longer than either Riad or I.

We quit traveling together to Israel after that. An Arab surname, even in a U.S. passport, plus a camera is an irresistible red flag. Entry without Riad was somewhat easier. And we briefed the crew on subsequent trips: no shop talk.

An interesting thing happened after our trip to the Arab Room. Dorothy called her parents to tell them we had arrived unscathed. The moment she said, "The airport was really weird," her call was cut off.

It sends you a simple message—we're listening. In some ways that is what I found most oppressive about working in the Territories. You'd come back into Jerusalem after a few days in the trenches witnessing God-knows-what-new-horror and you'd be dying to talk with your family, hungry for the touch of their support. But you couldn't go near the phone. You don't want the Army to know what you have on film, or where you've been, or what you saw. Over time the sense of living under siege became palpable, a ringing loneliness.

By 1993 Israel had put a new twist on keeping down improper image creation. I'm standing in the immigration queue at Ben Gurney. I hand my documents to the young women in her nice blue uniform and she glances at them. "You are a journalist?" "Yes, a journalist." "You cannot enter, you don't have a visa. You should have contacted us ahead of time."

Usual politics of intimidation, thought I. "I don't need a visa, I'm an American citizen. I can enter when I want." She throws me a poisonous glance, stamps the passport and motions me through. After all, I'm white. I didn't find out until a couple of days later what she was talking about.

We had embarked on the ritual of the Journalist's Credentials. This entails traveling into West Jerusalem to the National Baloney Factory, otherwise known as the Government Press Office at Beit Agroan. This had to be weirdest for Riad—requesting a document from New Yorkers to be able to film in his homeland without getting beat up.

The crew is sitting around filling out applications for press credentials, part of which acknowledged our

understanding that as journalists we can't make a phone call or send a fax that discusses the situation on the ground without first getting content cleared through the military censor.

I do most of the camera work, but this time I just wrote director as my job description. Barry Congrove, assistant cameraperson on that trip, completed his form and hands it to the clerk. The guy looks at the form and narrows his eyes at the five of us. "Which of you will be handling camera equipment?" Barry puts up his hand. "There's a new law. Foreign camera operators can only have credentials for two weeks." He proceeds to explain that the videographers union persuaded the government to protect Israeli jobs by limiting the amount of time a given project could use non-Israeli camera operators.

On its face this seems pretty reasonable, and it would be reasonable if the Army service requirements were different in Israel. Virtually every male between 18 and 50 performs active duty with the Israeli military once a year. Which means that any Israeli cameraman you hire may have—just the week before—been kicking the shit out of the people you're filming.

American networks abide by the law. We would frequently see convoys of Israeli crews in their armored Volvos rolling in from Jerusalem after clashes.

The implications are profound of this policy that "only our people are allowed to interpret our image to the world." The image conduit to the U.S. is, by law, narrowed to the perspective of Israeli reservists. This is not to say that every Israeli cameraperson is a slack-jawed lackey to the Army. On the other hand, if you are raised in a segregationist society your world view is going to be shaped by your environment. The obscene is normal and you may treat it as such in your work.

Mr. Credentials said one other very interesting thing. "You don't need credentials in the Territories, only if you want to film inside Israel." This is a classic bit of Orwellian speak. He may as well have said "we don't object to you putting your tongue in that light socket." Press credentials are the only protection against the Army that you've got in the Territories. And a puny bit of protection it is.

With the camera running, I asked the Keeper of the Credentials, the Army Spokesman, and the General who runs the "Civil Administration," exactly what the credentials enabled us to do in the Territories. Their answers were the same: "Oh, anything you want." I show their responses in the film as an example of the abyss between official Israeli government pronouncements and the situation on the ground.

The credential itself clips inside your passport. It's worthless plastic in terms of allowing you to do your work, but it can save your skin.

On our first trip into the Territories in 1988, Riad, John, and I decided to enter as tourists. We had letters from the Governor of Ohio and a Congressman basically saying we

were artists working with Ohio Arts Council funds and not to beat us up. We decided to steer clear of the Government Press Office and try to work without credentials. The Army was routinely seizing footage and equipment from journalists. We thought we might be able to move more easily if we weren't identified with the press.

One afternoon we shot an interview in Ramallah with a human rights caseworker from AlHaq (Law in the Service of Man). The shoot dragged on until after dark. Once finished, we brought the car around and surreptitiously began loading the equipment. We had learned early in the game that if the Army saw a crew entering or leaving a home they would make a point of visiting the family later, either to smash up the place, or to detain the person suspected of talking to the press.

We were making the last turn out of Ramallah for Jerusalem when two Army jeeps pulled in front of us and forced us to stop. "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" the leader of the pack yells into my face. "Trying to get back to Jerusalem." "WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?" "Uh, Nazareth." When we traveled we'd work out our story ahead of time; always use tourist towns for points of departure and destination. "GIVE US YOUR PASSPORTS!"

We hand over our passports. Riad is sitting in the back seat trying to make himself invisible. We've stuffed all of the production equipment into the trunk so we're looking pretty touristy.

The unit commander flips through the three passports. When he gets to Riad's he steps to his window. "WHAT WAS YOUR WHORE MOTHER DOING IN ARGENTINA?" Riad's passport indicates that he holds American citizenship but was born in Argentina. Riad answers "My family moved to Argentina before going to the States." "SPEAK ARABIC!" screams the unit commander. "My Arabic isn't very good." The commander, now very agitated, is yelling Arabic. "HAKI ARABI IBN SHARMOOTA." "SPEAK ARABIC YOU SON OF A WHORE."

He yells a clipped order in Hebrew. Two soldiers step to either side of the car and point their M-16s at John and me. Two more throw open Riad's door and drag him by his clothing onto the deserted street. The few cars that do approach the intersection are waved through. We are alone in the dark and at their mercy. My knees have started shaking for real.

"Is there a problem? What's the problem?" I go for my door latch and the soldier covering me sights down his rifle as if to say "one more inch and you won't need that head." They are dragging Riad around in the street like a dead animal, the commander screaming at him. Finally they stand him up, shove a rifle in his stomach and say something I can't catch in Arabic. Riad turns and says, quietly, "He's ordering me into the jeep. He says they're going to teach me manners."

I had read enough reports of young Palestinian men

found in olive groves with their heads stove in to know I would probably never see Riad again if he got into that jeep. I looked the soldier who was covering me in the eye, prayed, and stepped out of the car. Hanging onto the door—my knees don't seem to be cooperating—I'm yelling as loud as I can yell. "THIS MAN IS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. I WANT TO SEE YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER. THIS MAN IS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?" I'm terrified and very glad to have the door to support myself.

Riad pulls out his letter from the Governor of Ohio and hands it to the commander. He looks at it, tears it up and throws it in the street.

While I'm hanging off the car yelling, the other soldier tells John to pop the trunk. He does. They see the camera and tell the commander. Now it's my turn. I'm shoved over to the jeep. "YOU ARE JOURNALIST?" "Well, uh, media artist, yes." He shoves his face into mine. He's out of control, his spit hitting me in the face. "YOUR PICTURES ARE MAKING A LOT OF TROUBLE FOR US!"

You learn quickly in the Territories that carefully measured audacity can be salvation. Never show these punks fear, it just makes them feel more powerful. "THIS MAN IS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN. I WANT TO SEE YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER," I yell back. What's to lose at this point? I figured we were all in for it.

He gives me this weird look like "the sub-human must have some juice or he wouldn't talk to me like that." "I WANT YOU OUT OF HERE NOW!" "Yes, sir, we're gone." John reaches over and plucks the passports from the commander's hand and heads back to the car. The other soldiers look to their boss for orders. He says nothing. Riad and I jump in the car and take off, holding our breaths, waiting for the crack of the rifles. Nothing.

We decided that Israeli journalist credentials might not be a bad idea in the future. And we made a hard rule. No traveling in the Territories after dark. Be gone before dark, or stay where you are. The wolf packs come out at night.

Many a long night after that I lay in the darkness of my room polishing that sword named fear. What tomorrow? Will we all get out of here alive?

A year later when we went to get journalist credentials, Mr. Credentials was disturbed by the number of letters from U.S. Senators and Congressmen we dropped on his desk. "I've never had anyone bring in a letter from a Senator before, why do you have one?"

I explained that Riad and I had a very unpleasant interaction with Israeli troops on a previous trip and that I had no intention of repeating that experience, and neither had Senator Glenn.

We got our credentials, but had to listen to Mr. Credentials' excuses for why Israeli troops can't control themselves at the sight of an Arab surname. "You don't know what happened to those soldiers before you got there!" That kind of denial is like nails on a blackboard. "I was there. Tell me, do you think there's any excuse for an agent of government to call someone's mother a whore?"

So you've got some funding, equipment and credentials—and you're in the Territories. This is where it gets tough.

The Army will do anything to prevent you from capturing their tactics on film. And the Palestinian community has little reason to either trust you or to put any value in what you are trying to accomplish. Fortunately some Palestinians are committed to outreach work and are willing to help journalists. Still, developing contacts can take years. Riad, as a member of the community, was able to do a great deal in this regard, but we faced a siege atmosphere in many Palestinian communities: trust people you grew up with, and keep an eye on some of them.

Risk and benefit. Those were two issues we saw weighed before us daily. As Jad Isak, a member of the Palestinian negotiating team and a veteran of Israeli prisons,

said, "The sword of administrative detention hangs over the neck of every Palestinian."

You can go to jail for breathing if you're Palestinian in the Territories. Helping out journalists was a pretty good way to guarantee a trip to Ansar III. I think many of the people who did help us make contacts, or who appeared in the film, were convinced enough about the power of video to risk paying the price. The price got very high.

Of the people who helped us on our 1989 trip, 18 received administrative detention and four were shot. Zacharia Talamas almost paid with his life for helping us and his tale says much about the Army's attitude toward journalists. The logic is transparent. If someone can help film Palestinian resistance, then they must be part of the resistance, and must be taken out of circulation.

We are filming in Gaza in December 1989 and staying at Marna House (otherwise known as the Palestinian Foreign Ministry). We are making daily forays into the camps with the help of local journalists. Gaza was red hot.



People and the Land Co-producers Riad Bahhur and Tom Hayes, Occupied Territories, 1989.—Photo by Chuck Nelson.

You could barely move without dropping into the middle of a clash. The further you are from the press headquarters in Jerusalem, the more out of control the Army.

We'd had an endless afternoon in Shati Camp trying to get some footage without catching a round. It was a strike day so the soldiers had been cruising the camp in jeeps and on foot. Shooting people. Zacharia had gotten us onto a rooftop near an intersection so we had a decent vantage point. The shooting was heavy enough that Palestinian ambulances were cruising about a block behind the Army jeeps, picking up wounded like buses picking up passengers.

Filming through a crack between cinder blocks, I was trying to get a shot of a patrol that had emerged from one of the narrow paths in the camp. School girls, third and fourth graders from the look of them, wearing those cute blue and white striped school uniforms, were headed right toward the oncoming patrol.

The girls stopped in their tracks then, after a little discussion, proceeded forward. When they were 20 feet past the patrol, one of the soldiers raises his rifle and starts to chase them. Little feet fly. Blue and white dresses billow as tiny hands clutch each other. The soldier stops and looks back to his fellows. They all get a good laugh.

The footage, a group of girls running, a pan to a man with a machine gun slowing and turning away, is not all that dramatic. No arms or legs flew off, none of the stuff of evening news. But I must have watched that footage 50 times in my editing room. I ask myself the same question over and over: what would I do if a man with a machine gun chased my daughter on her way home from school, just for the pleasure of seeing her fear? What would any American do?

Getting out of the camp is more difficult than getting in. The shooting was picking up toward dusk. I was losing my light so we decided to split. Soldiers are all over the place, shooting on the slightest pretext. We walked out of the house into the street and shots cracked almost immediately. We started running up the sand road, very exposed, easy targets.

An old woman watching through a crack in her door runs out, pulls the white scarf from her head and waves it frantically at the troops as a truce flag. "Yalla, Yalla." "Come on." She hustles us through her house, into the garden. Of course a quick drinking of the juice is required, then we take off again, climbing over walls, and dodging through gardens trying to get back to our car. Zacharia had driven it away from the house and dropped it near the entrance of the camp to keep our presence inconspicuous. As we were climbing through another yard, I rolled camera, asked Riad to roll sound, and began describing the situation. "We are in Beach Camp, trying to get out without losing our film." "Or our lives," says Dorothy, her voice shaking.

The old lady had given us her white scarf as a

protective talisman. We got out of the camp intact, waving the white scarf for all we were worth. We later made a press flag for the car out of it. I think we had the only hand-embroidered press flag in Palestine.

We made it back to Marna House at dark and the proprietor, Madame Shouwa, immediately tucked us into a good dinner. Zacharia said he had to get home and off he went. Dinners at Marna house were almost always intense. All the guests ate together at what we came to call the Captain's Table. Madame Shouwa was the Captain, of course, and you didn't get much respect at that table if you hadn't put your head all the way into the proverbial lion's mouth.

Halfway through dinner Zacharia comes stumbling into the room. The right side of his face is red and puffy as though he's burned it. "Sit down, what's up, you okay?"

An Army patrol had grabbed him as he stepped out of the gate at Marna House. He was stuffed in a jeep and taken to Central Prison where he was beaten up, then hauled before an officer. "He told me, 'You better quit this journalism bullshit.' Then they brought me back here." We fed him coffee and sweets until he regained his composure, then he headed home. He was going to be doing some taping for NBC the next day, so we arranged to work in Khan Yunis with a friend named Saud who was doing legwork for Associated Press.

It was a fairly uneventful day and we got back to Marna house early. Three hours later Saud returned, obviously shaken. "Zacharia's been shot in the stomach. I was with him."

They had gone to tape in one of the camps but nothing much was going on. Zacharia was standing in the street panning around with a small Hi8 camera when a jeep pulled up. A soldier got out, went down on one knee, shot Zach in the stomach, then drove away. Saud and another cameraman carried Zach to the car, which got stuck in the sand. It took them quite a while to get him to hospital.

This was not a chance or accidental shooting. The camp was calm. Two journalists I know and respect were with him when it happened. The Army warned him, and they carried through.

In August 1988 the Israeli Army spokesman waxed uncharacteristically candid in a press briefing. "This isn't just a war of stones. This is a war of stones and photographs."

The early years of the *intifada* were the toughest in terms of direct assaults on camera crews. Confiscation of film and equipment, beatings, and shootings were all on the menu. Palestinian journalists were most heavily targeted. Their newspaper offices were welded shut and a great many were given administrative detention running into years without charge, trial, or family visits.

One of the first people we interviewed in 1988 was Kamel, a Palestinian journalist. He had just been released after a year of administrative detention at Ansar III, the

concentration camp in the Negev desert. His wife was six months pregnant with their first child when troops broke into their house and dragged him off into the night. His son was six months old before he met his father.

As foreign journalists, we didn't have to worry too much about being jailed unless we tried to film military prison camps, which would be interpreted as an act of spying. Making the Army really angry can result in the Israeli government's declaring you *persona non grata*—you're out for good. If the Army arrests you, that's it. Avoiding arrest and trying to do your work is a knife-edge you walk daily.

The primary problem was a sort of geographic censorship. If the Army spotted our crew a soldier would pull out a closure order, wave it in our face, and order us to leave the town. If a journalist was caught in a "closed area" the minimum retribution was arrest and a pink slip out of the country. Some American journalists weren't so lucky. Neal Cassidy, who photographed for the New York City newspaper *Front Line*, was shot in Nablus. Photographer Bill Biggart, who did work for *The Village Voice* and *The Christian Science Monitor*, was caught alone by Israeli troops and thoroughly stomped.

In the course of our filming, we experienced an exciting range of Army hospitality. We were shot at and targeted for gassing. Or a soldier would attempt to slam the camera through the back of my head. It's a simple technique: shove the lens hard enough and the eyepiece will try to spoon the cameraman's eyeball out.

At first the troops can intimidate you into leaving simply by stating, "This is a closed military area, you have to leave." After a while we got wise to the fact that soldiers would lay this line on us whether we were in a closed area or not. We started demanding to see the closure order. This was partly for our own entertainment, and partly a step in the dance of intimidation and defiance.

We were in Ramallah one day unloading our equipment to film a follow-up interview at the AlHaq human rights monitoring office. We had already hauled one load up to their fourth floor offices. When we returned to our car, two Army jeeps were waiting for us, soldiers gathered around our rental car.

A young officer, early twenties, obviously of European origin, comes up. "This is a closed military area. You can't film here. You have to leave the town." I countered that there had been no barricades when we entered town, so when did the closure go into effect? "Today. The people have not been so quiet. We are taking measures." He was making it up as he went. There was no curfew. The town was wide open. He was just doing his bit to stop our filming.

I explained that we weren't trying to film the town, that we were there to shoot an interview. "It's a closed area you can't film anything. You have to leave."

"If this town is closed where's the closure order. I want

to see the order." The soldiers went through their pockets. The Army had been issuing blank Closure Orders to troops so that they could fill in location and date when and where they found journalists. But none of the soldiers had a blank handy so they held us there on the street at gunpoint while one of them drove off to fetch one. One of the people at AlHaq snapped a picture of us surrounded by soldiers on the sidewalk beneath their windows.

I hate it when an Israeli soldier points an M-16 at me. Ouzis and Galili rifles I can take, but not the insult of an M-16. I pay taxes that are sent to Israel to insure its "security." Then that aid is shoved in my face in the form of an automatic weapon to keep me from communicating how the aid is being used to the people putting up the cash.

Twenty minutes later an Army jeep careens to a stop and a Closure Order is presented to us. Then we had to go through a negotiation about the load of equipment we had already carried up to the fourth floor. "Can we go back up and get our camera now?" "You must leave now." "I can't leave without the camera." "No." "I'm not leaving without it." "One of you get the camera. The rest stay here." Their jeeps escort us out of town.

Ramallah is close to Jerusalem, press headquarters for the world. The further you went into the Territories the tougher the Army was on journalists.

We were doing some follow-up filming in Jenin when two Army jeeps screeched in front and behind us at an intersection. Riad, Dorothy and I pass out our press cards. Their radios spit and hoot for a while then an older soldier approaches the car. He doesn't speak English, but he is speaking Arabic to Riad. "He says we can't film here." "What does he mean 'here'?"

It had become standard MO to push back when the Army pushed us, pretending we weren't intimidated. But survival is tied to knowing when to stop pushing back.

The three-way conversation through Riad had reached the "I want to see the closure order" stage. "He says he doesn't need an order. He says it's a soldiers' order." "Tell him I want to see the order. Tell him we have credentials from his government." "Tooom," Riad says between his teeth. I glance back over my shoulder.

The soldier has stepped back from the car and raised his gun to waist level. A real gun, not a word on a page. The other seven soldiers have moved to flank him. He barks something in Arabic. "He says it's a soldiers' order." I'm scared, yes, and frustrated out of my skin. We've been on the road four hours crawling through checkpoints getting here. The day is going to be a bust if we're summarily thrown out. Or beat up, or shot. "Ask him if he expects me to believe that he can close this whole town without a written order."

Riad reluctantly translates my question. It does the trick. He says that we can film the town but we are not allowed to film any soldiers. We must cover the camera lens when we are around soldiers. We say "fine" and they

let us drive away.

What the man with the gun was ordering us to do was give reality a holiday. Creating images in the Occupied Territories that exclude the occupier is like filming an abattoir without filming the butcher.

In the fall of 1989, Beit Sahour had a tax strike under the oddly familiar slogan "No Taxation Without Representation." The Israeli Army threw an extended siege and curfew on the town during which they plundered, looted, and trashed much of Beit Sahour in the name of "tax seizures." It was one of the beautiful and terrible stories of the Uprising; the granite solidarity of the community, the base expression of rage from the occupier.

Peace Now had scheduled a trip to express solidarity with the people of Beit Sahour shortly after the siege ended. We were intent on filming this meeting. It's important for Americans to understand that Israel is not a political monolith.

We packed up and took off early. The Peace Now buses were supposed to be there at 3:00 but we wanted to be in place well ahead of time.

Just outside of Bethlehem the road drops sharply into Beit Sahour. No sooner do we make the turn but we're at an Army barricade. A soldier whose flat Midwestern accent smacks of Chicago leans in the window. "You can't enter Beit Sahour. It's a closed military area. Here's the order." No luck there.

We drive up into Bethlehem and worm our way down steep alleys and goat paths, a secret access into Beit Sahour. It is not looking good for the Peace Nowers. We decide to try filming the Army turning back the Peace Now buses. A family whose house clung to a ridge directly opposite the blockade lets us film from their veranda.

We film the Army turning back several United Nations vehicles, but no Israeli busses show up. Through our telephoto we could make out two people sitting beside the checkpoint, obviously bound. Soldiers walked over periodically and whacked or kicked them.

Someone tells us that Peace Now was trying to get into town the back way. We load up and try to drive across town. Despite some Three Stooges driving—going between houses and through yards—the Army had us in 10 minutes. "You are in a closed military area. We will escort you out. If you are seen here again you will be arrested."

Fine. Two jeeps escort us back to the entrance of the town. One of our helpers suggests that we could at least catch a shot of the busses entering town from the balcony of a house overlooking Beit Sahour city limits. This way we'd be outside of the closed area, but have a good view, through a long lens, of the town.

We drive over to the house. An Army unit has taken over the roof of a house on the high point above Beit Sahour. We park our car where they can't see it, well away from the house we want to film from. People in the neighborhood help us move our equipment piece by piece

to the house and we begin setting up. We thought we'd been pretty cool, pretty invisible. Not.

There is a rumble of trucks outside and the screech of air brakes. A little girl looking out the door screams "Jaish!" "Soldiers!" A 13-year-old boy runs into the bathroom and hides in the shower. Outside troops in full combat gear are pouring from two trucks. I'm out on the balcony with the camera trying to figure out how to handle this. After all, we're not inside the closed area, so maybe defiance is the attitude of the hour, or . . . not.

Definitely not. Six gun barrels come around the back corner of the house, trained on the crew. "Keep your hands where they can see them and don't move," I mutter. A horrendous pounding has started on the front door, Army boots and rifle butts. Our hostess opens the door. There's no discussion, not a word exchanged. The soldiers clog the house. "You will leave now. Right now or we will arrest you." There are 50 soldiers surrounding the house and wandering through its rooms. There is absolutely no arguing with these guys.

As we are pulling away in the car our hostess shouts, plenty loud enough for the soldiers to hear, "Don't forget your dinner invitation." We did in fact slip back into town for supper. We held onto our dignity through those little acts of resistance.

You can't expect respect if you don't put yourself at the same risk that the people you're filming live under every day of their lives. If we were filming a clash, we went without the designer body armor many American journalists sport. We were as vulnerable as any kid on the street.

Still, I get to walk away with my white skin and my U. S. passport. If I bring two truckloads of soldiers down on a family, it may visit my nights but the repercussions don't touch my life.

Leaflets from the Unified National Leadership of the *intifada* set out a calendar of resistance. If we thought we would be filming a clash, the crew would wear matching tee-shirts or jackets with the letters "TV" stenciled large between the shoulder blades. Below that, "JOURNALIST" in Arabic and Hebrew.

Denial is a way of life for the Israeli Army: "The press is free to film the Army." "The Army's role is not to punish people." "There are no death squads." I didn't want anyone on my crew shot in the back by "mistake." We frequently changed the vehicles we were renting—not so much for anonymity, but for license plate color. The basic color code is yellow=Israeli, blue=West Bank Palestinian, white=Gaza Palestinian. Israeli settlers have yellow plates regardless of where they live. This simplifies harassment of Palestinians and minimizes inconvenience to settlers.

Deciding which plate to wear on a given expedition is not that simple. If you use yellow, you aren't going to get much trouble from the Army. Approach the checkpoint with confidence, you'll slide through. But when you get to

where you're going, people will be suspicious that you're settlers come to rain havoc, and you may lose a windshield or worse.

The Army is going to home in on the people you film because there's a car with the wrong color plates near the house. We got in the habit of putting yellow plate vehicles in barns or garages, or dumping them on the outskirts of town after we'd unloaded.

If you wear a blue plate, the Army will treat you like a Palestinian: long waits, vehicle searches, explanations of why a card-carrying human being is sitting in a car with blue plates. But if you can get to where you're going, you can move about quietly. There's nothing on the vehicle to leave the journalist scent.

Yellow plates are very handy if you want to drive inside Israel at night. It is illegal for Palestinians from the Occupied Territories to spend the night in Israel, so forget the blue or white plates. Swinging through Israel to get back to Jerusalem was something we did several times. If we worked late in Nablus or Jenin, we'd punch across the Green Line in our yellow plate special and avoid the checkpoints.

If we were playing tourist, we'd take a yellow plate Israeli rental car into the Territories and keep a checkered kaffiyya on the dashboard when moving through Palestinian towns. If we approached a checkpoint we'd stuff the kaffiyya under the seat 'til we'd cleared the troops.

Some strategies for dealing with the Army were more perverse. I picked up several corrosively bright shirts at the Salvation Army, and wore them constantly. These shirts are guaranteed to make you underestimate the wearer on sight (as in "only a moron would wear . . ."). I also carried a yo-yo. If soldiers got into that mean kind of kick-yer-ass testiness, I'd pull out the yo-yo and start doing "'round the worlds." I'm older than most of the soldiers. The image: eye-searing shirt, yo-yo, \$40,000 camera—full-on ozone cowboy American—worked on several occasions to get the boyz in green to react like I was possibly infectious.

Those are the mechanics of gathering footage in Occupied Palestine, but some discussion of project method is in order, a look at the documentary philosophy behind *People and the Land*.

We tried to maintain a kind of controlled chaos system during the nearly seven months of filming we did in the Territories: Don't even try to make plans; the Army's sure to screw them up anyway, and you also risk filming to the plan instead of catching the situation around you.

I am comfortable inside that kind of chaos, Riad less so, but we kept things very loose. We'd go out the door with the camera loaded, the recorder threaded, and enough charged batteries, underwear and film for several days of shooting. We shot any manifestation of the occupation we could get away with.

There were things we couldn't film. Unforgettable things. We were trying to get back to Gaza City from Rafah

one day. It was close to the first anniversary of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence. The Occupied Territories were seething and the Army was not liking it. Khan Yunis was blocked off—there had been an armed operation against the Army—so we took back roads, mostly sand paths, to get around it.

We came into a village well back from the main road, on the eastern side of the Gaza Strip, that was crawling with Army. As we turned onto the road that would take us back toward Gaza City we came upon a large ditch completely surrounded by soldiers and jeeps. The males in the village, 70 or so, had been herded down into the bottom. Old men squatted beside their grandsons amidst the trash. You could hear murmured assurance to the little ones. The older faces gazed up at the ring of soldiers and guns on the rim of the ditch, as though memorizing the faces.

A tableau of oppression. But no way in hell we could shoot it.

It's not just the Army that's hostile to the camera. Israeli civilians got into it with us as well.

We're in the old city of Haifa, the pre-1948 Arab city, a ghost city. Tier on tier of old homes throw empty stares at the Mediterranean. These are the homes of refugees, empty since their owners fled in 1948. Trees grow through roofs supported on fine marble columns. Soft dents of generations of travel ripple the great staircases that lead up from the sea and through the decaying buildings. Some of the houses bear Hebrew signs "Rat Poison, Unfit For Habitation."

I had gathered considerable footage for *Native Sons*, particularly from British archives, of Haifa after it fell to Jewish nationalists. Rough black and white images of a desolate empty city. That moment is frozen in Old Haifa. It looks pretty much today as it did in those '48 newsreels. Block on block of old empty homes whispering their loss.

I've met several families, some in the camps in Lebanon, some in the States, who had left Haifa on boats, or walked overland to the border during the '48 war. Standing there outside their homes—so mundane, just standing out there with the camera—is something the owners haven't been able to do for 50 years. They've been defined by Israel as the wrong kind of human being to live on top of that soil. Old Haifa is a museum to fascism and intolerance.

I'm squinting through the camera, getting a shot of one of the long ascending public stairways, when one of the infrequent cars that uses the neighborhood for a shortcut passes, then stops and turns around.

An Israeli fellow in his fifties gets out and lumbers over to the camera. "What are you filming this for?" I explained that it was an interesting image, city blocks of vacant homes on a hillside. "You shouldn't film this. What do you want to film this for?" This exchange went on for a couple of minutes during which two more Israeli men approached us on foot. The three conferred, then went into the same routine, "Go down into the new parts of town, there's lots

of nice stuff to film there." They badgered us for half an hour while we worked around them.

When we filmed Israeli demonstrations against the occupation, inevitably we'd find cadres of ultranationalist Zionists, mostly settlers, who didn't want cameras recording the blasphemy. At a Women in Black event, a fellow followed me around pushing a newspaper in front of the lens. Women in Black, an organization of Israeli women, was formed in 1988 and has demonstrated under the slogan "Stop the Occupation" every Friday since. Actually I think they stopped briefly when Oslo Air Freshener was sprayed, but the stink came back and so did they.

There is an Israeli company called Victims of Arab Terror, Incorporated, that was formed it seems just to harass Women In Black demonstrations. Every week they're out there with their signs ("Rope for the Arabs and These Black Traitors"), hollering across the street, "These black widows are traitors to their country and their people. They're sick demented Jews."

Despite the pressures from official and non-official Israel we were able to accumulate nearly 20 miles of footage in the Territories. There are many disturbing images crawling around in those reels, but their cumulative meaning is quite simple: Israel wants the Palestinians to disappear from the land and has applied dozens of insidious policies to achieve that goal. Pressure to leave is well leavened with provocation. When Palestinian resistance responds to provocation, Israel uses the response as justification to ratchet up collective punishment of Palestinian communities.

Some of these punishments, like curfews, are nearly impossible to photograph well. If you go out during a curfew you'll be shot, beaten, or jailed, or even tied to the hood of an Army jeep and driven around town as an object lesson. The impact on people's lives is enormous.

In the Gaza Strip, for example, there was for six years a curfew that began at 9 p.m. and lasted until 3:30 a.m. No having friends over to listen to the World Cup games, or to watch a TV show, or for a game of bridge. The entire Strip lived for six years like they were on a work-release program from jail. As the years of resistance wore on, the evening curfews, as distinct from the mass arrest curfews, spread into the West Bank.

We were filming in Jenin one day when, at sunset, jeeps with loudspeakers began to cruise around barking out the curfew announcement. "MAMNUA BTJOWAL! MAMNUA BTJOWAL!" "It is forbidden to move around." You aren't supposed to go outside for any reason during a curfew. Sometimes soldiers will even order "lights out" during a curfew.

We had found an empty house for quarters in Jenin. We got ourselves back there and Dorothy and Riad started to put together some dinner. A cold wet November wind was sharing the house with us so I decided to light the

portable kerosene heater that sat in the living room. I don't know much about kerosene heaters. No sooner had I put a match to the wick than a black, choking smoke began to billow out of it. I'm hollering for Riad's help, and he says "get it out of here." The heater was belching smoke like a burning tire. I grabbed its handle and ran for the door. When I grabbed the knob my heart flopped in realization that if I stepped out the door I could be shot for breaking curfew. I hesitated, but the heater made my mind up for me. We're talking about a major pile of stinking smoke. I threw open the door, ran out, dumped the heater and dashed back into the house.

It's in the simple things, like opening a door without fear, that the realities of the occupation reveal themselves. How often have you started cooking dinner only to discover that some essential ingredient was going to require a quick trip to the corner store? We discovered there wasn't an onion in the house, but we'd seen some on the porch railing. We turned off the lights one by one, so the open door wouldn't attract attention, then Dorothy crawled out onto the porch and snagged the onions. At dawn the next morning the loudspeakers came by again: "You can look out your windows now."

I sometimes ponder how Americans would respond to a year or two of that.

Israel insists that these curfews are not collective punishment, defined as a war crime by the Geneva Accords, but are instituted for the "protection" of the communities.

On a separate occasion, during the intense July heat, the Army imposed a two-day curfew during which electricity and water to Jenin were cut off.

Qabatiyya, a little town south of Jenin, went through more than a month of continuous curfew without water or electricity after a collaborator was killed. People were not even allowed to leave their houses to feed their livestock. Animals that broke loose from hunger or thirst were shot down in the streets for breaking curfew. The mayor told us the water cut-off was so severe and extended that people had been pushed to clean themselves with their own urine. This wasn't a punitive action against some criminal convicted of a heinous crime. It was revenge against a whole town.

Qabatiyya has a reputation across the Levant for its fine olive arbors, the strong saplings they husband and sell. A year's crop of new seedlings died during that curfew and a crop of yearlings was damaged beyond marketability. Like everyone else, they went a month without water. We filmed greenhouse after greenhouse of parched yellow olive seedlings. It struck me as a powerful symbol of war, a quarter million dead olive branches.

The years of school and university closings, the curfews, the demolition of homes, the deportations, the lack of anything resembling due process prior to imprisonment, the murders of unarmed Palestinians, particularly children. Provocation upon provocation. As an outside observer it

looked like Israel was begging the resistance to put down the stones and pick up guns.

I was in Beirut when Israel's occupation reached all the way into the southern suburb of Ozai. Lebanese patriots blew up Israeli troops and Israel pulled back to the Litani River. More Lebanese patriots blew up more Israeli troops and the Army pulled back south of Tyre. The recent spate of successful operations against Israeli troops in occupied southern Lebanon (euphemism: Security Zone) has the Knesset discussing a unilateral pullout from Lebanon.

There was no discussion of a pullout or even a redeployment in Gaza until a few Palestinian patriots stopped throwing rocks and started shooting troops. Suddenly Bone Breaker Rabin wanted out of Gaza. Initiation of talks with the PLO coincided closely with Palestinian use of firearms in the Gaza Strip.

That's not to say there wasn't something sad and beautiful in the war of the stones: a systematically disarmed people pulling up pieces of the very land they were fighting for and hurling it at their oppressors. Poetry—revealing to the world the nature of the occupation.

We spent considerable time in Palestinian hospitals, places where the stones may very well have turned themselves into bullets. Our purpose was to gather footage of the types and numbers of *intifada*-related injuries being admitted, documentable facts with relevance to provisions of the Geneva Accords. We would regularly film a series of wards and document the new casualties.

This boy shot in the abdomen, this one beaten until he went into shock, a round in the lung, in the leg, poison gas. I hadn't drawn a connection between the school closures and casualties until we started filming in the wards. So many children who should have been in school. So many children who had demonstrated against an occupation that robbed them of their education. So many new faces in the wards.

Few but the most serious cases even went to the hospital. If you were shot through the leg or the arm, it was safer to snag some antibiotics and stay home. The Army had a reputation for removing people with bullet wounds

from the Gaza hospitals for interrogation.

One day while we were filming in a Gaza emergency room, a father ran in carrying his four-year-old daughter. A gas canister had caught her in its cloud, searing membranes in her nose. He and his wife couldn't get the nosebleed to stop. There was fear in her eyes. There was more in his as he stood there wiping away the blood.

The emergency room staff engaged immediately, trying to induce clotting. The little girl's grandfather arrived and helped by holding her hand. He spoke to us in English, composed and dignified, "Too much gas. Too much gas." He stayed so cool, a rock bracing his son as he cleaned the steady stream of blood from his daughter's face.

Some of those hospital beds are going to live with me the rest of my life. One at Jerusalem's Mak-assed hospital in particular.

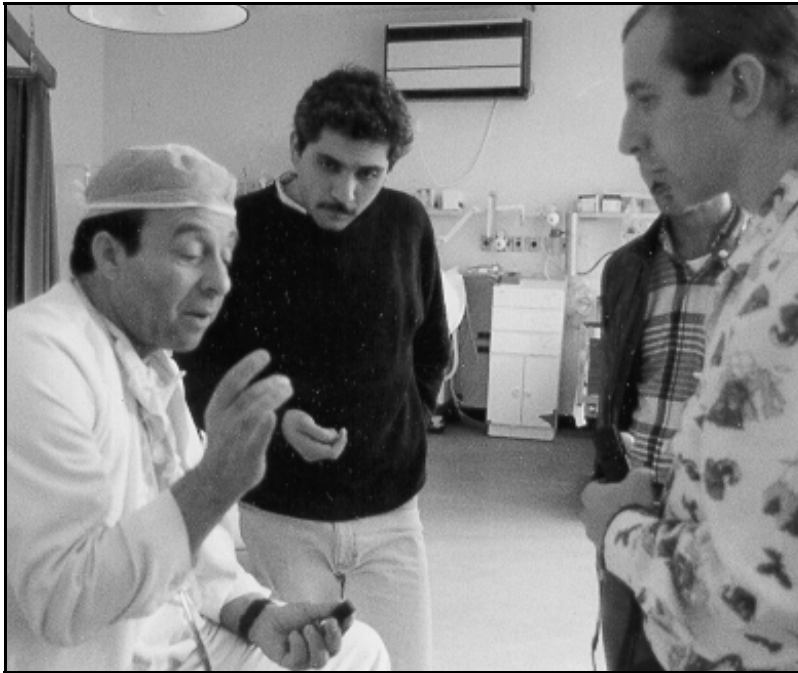
It started with a dream, very vivid, real time. In the dream I'm in a hospital room holding the rail of a bed where my only child lies. She has somehow lost her legs. Nothing left but bandaged stumps. The calamity before me,

unthinkable terror.

I wake up in the darkness shaken. The dream, so vivid, I got out of bed and dropped to my knees praying to God that my little girl is alright. Then I grabbed the phone and woke up my wife who checked on "Little Bit" while I waited. She was fine.

I know where that dream began. We had scheduled to do some follow-up filming in Deheisha Camp, outside of Bethlehem, but when we got there we found the camp under curfew, a closed military area with jeeps across the only entrance. The day was pretty well blown, so we went back to East Jerusalem. We decided to use the time to do a lighting check at Makassed Hospital: just take in a meter and see what we were up against. It was taking a while to get clearance to film at Makassed, but I wanted to have the shoot prepped and ready.

The Chief of Anesthesiology walked us through the wards and treatment areas. He showed us projectiles that had been collected from the bodies of wounded patients. He showed us x-rays of the damage the projectiles had



Hayes (right), documenting Israeli-inflicted injuries on Palestinian children, is briefed by Dr. Dajani, Chief of Anesthesiology at Makassed Hospital, East Jerusalem. — Photo by Dorothy Thigpen.

caused, and took us around to the wards and treatment areas to meet the people whose x-rays we'd seen.

As we were saying our good-byes, the doctor raised his finger, "Oh, along the way there's someone I want you to meet." He motioned us into a room at the end of a dim green corridor. It was a ward of ten beds on the first of which lay a little boy of 9 years. He has somehow lost his legs. Nothing left but stumps. And one of his hands.

The doctor is explaining that someone shot an Israeli anti-tank shell into his family's dining room in Hebron. I'm not registering much of what he's saying. The nightmare image of my own child lying mangled is rising through me like a tornado, showing me for a mind-searing second exactly how I'd feel if he was my own boy. I start crying. Not the red-around-the-eyes kind, the "where is God" kind. I had to go out to the car. From that strange morning forward I watched what was happening to the children with a deeper interest.

The State of Israel was responsible for the deaths of 232 Arab children from December 1987 through July 1993. In proportional terms it would have been 40,000 children in a population the size of the U.S. The U.S. press did provide an occasional whiff of a story if the child was very young, "*Six-year-old dies from Army beating.*"

Anat Hoffman of Women in Black, a member of the Jerusalem City Council, articulated the situation concisely: "Two children is an accident, 200 children is a policy."

From December 1987 through July 1993, Israeli forces wounded 120,000 Palestinians. When you fire lead sufficient to create those kinds of casualties you are bound to lose some rounds in chests and heads. Yes, 232 children died, but I think the real story, the policy evidence, is in the 46,000 Palestinians under age 16 who were disabled by Israeli security forces during that six-year period.

The numbers on the ground, and the cases I saw in the hospitals, suggest a more horrible interpretation than Anat's: the policy wasn't so much killing children but maiming them *en masse* as a way of pressuring their parents to leave their homeland.

In the face of the maiming policy it is easy for the killings to happen. When the Army charges a crowd, everybody on the street runs, I mean everybody. Journalists, grandmothers, medics. The smaller you are the shorter your stride. Little kids would frequently wind up at the rear of a retreating crowd.

There is no incentive to stop running when the troops yell "Halt!" Too many people who allowed themselves to be captured were beaten to death or permanently disabled while in custody. When the crowd doesn't "Halt!," the Army unloads their M-16's into their legs and in the process winds up hitting heads and chests.

One point of Army procedure that seems like it should have been a big story was the berets worn by Israeli patrols, even in Gaza City.

The question: In a conflict characterized by stone-throwing, what is the worst thing that can happen to you? Clue one: a rock buries itself in a smiley-faced watermelon. Clue two: rocks bounce off a helmeted watermelon. It was

rare to see a helmeted Israeli soldier. If the troops put on their helmets they couldn't very well claim that their lives were endangered by rock-throwing. They'd never get a chance to shoot.

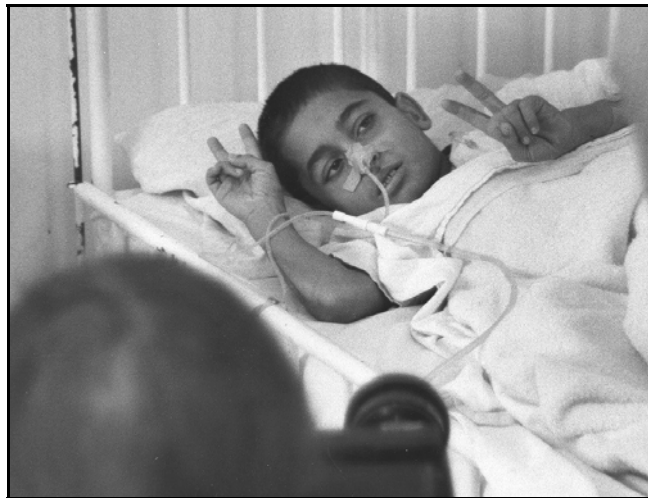
We were able to persuade the Army to let us ride on a sanitized "press patrol" in 1993. Not one of the twelve soldiers on this "corporate image patrol" wore a helmet. It struck me as a "Dirty Harry" approach to occupation, "Go ahead punk, make my day."

The first clashes we filmed were scary and exciting. The energy and courage of the *shabab*, the youth. The

solidarity of the community. The gunfire and the deadly chase. After working in the hospitals filming x-rays, documenting minute details of the impact of those weapons on human bone, meeting people who were going to have to live or die with that damage, what began as excitement became century-long minutes of terror for me.

I'd gotten to know those kids and had received the hospitality of their homes. I wanted desperately for all of us to return to our families as whole human beings. When the Army would charge, my knees began going to jelly on me, I'd have to brace against a wall to steady the camera. "Please God don't let anyone get hit." The popular canonization of journalists—cool detachment while hovering fearless, in a nice suit, over the mayhem they're reporting—is something I can't get my head around. I'm not a cowboy riding a bucking adrenal gland. I always wear my seat belt. I find the business end of an assault rifle leaves very little room for detachment.

As the weeks of filming went on, we all found the ugliness of the situation chewing on us like some black fungus. It's the isolation. You can't really talk to your family back home about what you're seeing, about the



Author films boy injured by IDF, al-Ahli Hospital, Gaza City.—
Photo by Dorothy Thigpen.

realities of the situation. One wrong word on the phone is going to let the perpetual listeners know what we're filming, or where, provide clues about our helpers' locations, or set us up for trouble with the Military Censor.

Registering as a journalist with Israel requires a signed commitment to clear every fax, every foreign call that involves discussion of the situation, every tape, and every reel of film through the Military Censor's office at Beit Agroan. Failure to do so is punishable by imprisonment or deportation. While you're filming you constantly live with the implicit threat that if you mess with the Army the Censor isn't going to let you take your footage out of the country.

You can't clear your material bit by bit. No more than 48 hours prior to leaving the country, you have to physically drag the crates up to the Censor's office where armed soldiers decide if it stays or leaves. All your work, all the risks and sacrifices contained in those crates, comes down to that moment. They can do anything they want, from seizing the entire heap, to screening the material frame by frame. They have guns.

Every story you see on television has been through this process, although the networks rarely acknowledge it. The chronic failure to inform viewers and listeners that material has been cleared through the Israeli Military Censor amounts to a form of systematic distortion. It gives the impression that what is posing as information is coming to you "free and clear."

When the Detroit PBS station taped its follow-up program for the broadcast of *People and the Land*, the moderator started slamming the "quality of journalism" in the program. I had to laugh. The network he works for hasn't acknowledged censor clearance since the Gulf War. My response was that *People and the Land* held itself to a higher journalistic standard than PBS or any of the networks by disclosing the strictures through which the American people receive the information.

The Censor on duty asks for all the cases to be emptied. I drag about 50 cubic feet of film cans and Hi8 tapes onto the floor of the office. "Who is helping you do all this filming? What are their names? What towns are they from? What did you film?" I'm being offered a not terribly subtle bribe: give us some people and we'll let you and your footage go.

"Everybody helps, I don't know their names, we filmed whatever the Army allowed us to film." "Holy sites" was also an effective response to the Censor's questions. After all, every place in Palestine is a Holy Place to someone. It's a hard answer to tease any information from and it doesn't antagonize.

At any point the officer can demand to see the footage. In our case this would have meant processing and printing in an Israeli lab. Fortunately the duty officers I encountered weren't in the mood for confrontation. After the questions, they'd hand me a form thick with carbon paper, a legal

document on which I was to explain the content of the footage and sign a declaration that nothing in the footage was a threat to state security.

There are events that preoccupy any nation, even occupying nations. World Cup soccer games, for example. I arrive at the Censor's office with nine crates of footage, smack in the middle of the Israel vs. Poland match. They've pulled the monitors off their playback decks and are glued to the screens. I'm the last thing in the universe they want to mess with.

The Censor hurriedly reads the signed form. The armed soldiers are oblivious to anything but the game. You hold your breath as the Censor's seal descends onto the pages. Then all the footage goes back into the cases and he applies a seal to each case. Without the seal the footage will not leave the country.

We always went to the airport three hours early so there would be plenty of time for our search and interrogation.

Every single time Israeli security officers would say that the material was not allowed to leave the country. Censor's seals aside, they let you know that your exit was in their hands. "Who helped you, what are their names, where are they from? You couldn't have filmed all of this on your own." She is in her early twenties, a true believer, her English clipped and precise. "We need to know who helped you, for your own safety." My response is that the Military Censor has already cleared the footage. I lean into the adage *when threatened be aggressive*: "The right of journalists to maintain confidentiality of sources is internationally recognized."

"Wait right here." She marches off and returns with someone higher in the food chain. He's in his late forties and carries a distinct Philly accent. "Whatah de names o'de people det hepd chu fim?" I know the type, generally you run into them in settlements. I decide to go for the weak spot, racism. "I don't know, everyone's named Mohammed or Ali around here and lives in Beit something." He looks at me hard. After a moment the image—clueless, Hawaiian-shirted American—prevails; he relaxes.

We're still pulled aside with our 27 crates for that special search. Every single thing in every single case comes out. The collapsing miniature darkroom goes up so security can touch the unprocessed negative. Two hours and several thousand dollars in excess baggage fees later our passports are handed back to us and we are instructed to go to the departure lounge and wait for the boarding call before entering passport control.

We grab some breakfast and hope that there are no hitches. You aren't really home free until you leave Israeli airspace. We finally hear the TWA boarding call over the loudspeakers and hustle up to Passport Control. I hand my passport to the officer who glances at it, then hands it back. "You haven't received an exit visa. You are not allowed to pass." There wasn't anything to argue about, so I took off in

a not too calm search for the security officer who had handled my passport. It wasn't long before I saw her, standing behind a door, watching me through a small window.

"Excuse me, do you remember me? You cleared me but must have forgotten to put the exit visa in my passport." Staring sullenly at me she clips out the words, "I did not forget." I stand there, mute, holding out my open passport like one of my vital organs. She finally takes it from my hand, pulls a little yellow sticker from her pocket and puts it on the page. "Goodbye, Mister Hayes."

The anvil sitting on my stomach didn't begin to lift until the landing gear left the tarmac and we arched out over the Mediterranean.

Getting footage "in the can" and easing it and a living crew back to the States is all very nice, but there shouldn't be any sense of accomplishment in it. You're no closer to getting it into the nation's living rooms than when you started. The Information Blockade is cocked and waiting like a bear trap.

The first time I got my leg hung in that thing was in the early 80s. I was editing *Native Sons* but had zero finishing funds. Grant writing was getting me nowhere until the George Gund Foundation out of Cleveland awarded us a grant adequate to complete the work, the first time they had funded an independent film project. There was much naive rejoicing.

About a week later there was a tiny squib of a story in the entertainment section of *The Columbus Dispatch*: "The Community Film Association has received a \$25,000 grant from the George Gund Foundation for Tom Hayes's project, *Native Sons*, that examines the lives of three Palestinian refugee families in Lebanon." That's all it said, but it changed my world.

My funders and potential funders, and the Community Film Association that administered my grants, received letters from the Columbus Jewish Federation painting me as a PLO stooge, making perverse allegations about the Gund Foundation, and "insisting" on editorial control of the film.

At the same time freelance enthusiasts—Jewish Defense League types—began harassing my family. Phone calls into all hours, obscene threats against my then pregnant wife, threats on her life and mine. I put wire mesh on all the windows except the living room, a simple way to avoid a firebombing. It didn't help; someone came into the yard and busted that window out. At one point our phone line was cut as I prepared to take a business trip. I stayed home.

We talked to the police several times, even providing them a tape of one set of calls. But whenever we got to the question "why would you be having this problem" and I explained what I was working on, they'd sort of wander away asking quietly over their shoulders if I owned a firearm. This was in Columbus, Ohio, not Jenin or Hebron. Nevertheless we had begun to feel like we lived in occupied territory.

The whole thing was so dumb. Like I'd forget about the film if enough people hassled me. I had already put my butt on the line precisely because I suspected there were structures preventing a broad base of information on issues Palestinian. These info-terrorists did nothing but affirm the reasons I started this work in the first place. We got scared, sure, and we got busy.

One of the grants the Community Film Association (CFA) was administering came from the Ohio Arts Council. This was a matter of public record. The Columbus Jewish Federation secured that information, and a copy of the Gund Foundation proposal, which was not public record. Under the signature of Eric Rozenman, Director of Community Relations, a second barrage of correspondence went to my funders trashing the film and me and urging CFA to disassociate itself from the project.

A CFA board member told me that he and other board members had received intimidating phone calls from people at Federation: "You are responsible for Tom Hayes engaging in propaganda with public funds. There's going to be an injunction against this film and your whole board is going to be sued for their personal assets."

The board was basically a bunch of folks who liked to watch movies, and thought it exciting to help an independent filmmaker occasionally. This *Native Sons* thing was giving them a lot of unexpected grief. They called me in to announce that one of their number would screen the rough cut. They sent Dennis Aig, who was at the time active with (I'm sure you can guess) the Columbus Jewish Federation.

Dennis ended his private screening standing on a chair in my cutting room yelling, "You can't say that! You can't say that." His visit was followed a week later by a letter from CFA informing me that the board had found that I was engaging in propaganda and would therefore forfeit a \$20,000 reimbursement grant from the Ohio Arts Council.

I had borrowed once again on the house (counting on reimbursement from the grant for repayment) and spent the loan on lab charges. I contacted OAC howling for help. Chris Nygren, who coordinated the media arts program, informed CFA that it had the right to forfeit the grant. BUT if it followed this course, with its implicit effect on an artist, then CFA could not expect to see another OAC grant. It was some ice cold line like "if you forfeit then you must not want our funding" that did the trick.

Two days later I received a letter from CFA stating that it would complete its commitments on existing grant contracts. The financial heat was off, but the freelancers kept at my family with threats and harassment.

The Ohio State University School of Fine Arts had booked the premiere for a series called Personal Independents and would be using a local theater for screenings. I got a call from the curator, Nancy Robinson, telling me that *Native Sons* was going to have to be shown elsewhere; the theater owner was refusing to show it.

I suggested that she might respond to this censorship by telling the owner she planned to pull the whole series out of his theater. That served as an inducement to him to straighten up and act like a supporter of artistic freedom. Personal interest conquered politics.

A week before the premiere of the film, Alex Odeh, a regional director in California for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, was blown in half by a bomb wired to his office door. He had apparently commented on local television that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Suddenly the threats felt less like threats and more like impending doom. Bomb squad in place, we premiered the film. At a press conference that night I spoke out against the Columbus Jewish Federation's attempts to limit artistic freedom.

If American Zionists had left the project and my family alone, I doubt that I would have continued work on the topic. They made it personal and they made it part of the politics of my community. I'm old enough to remember that the same tactics of intimidation were used to keep black Americans from registering to vote in the South. There's no way I could walk away and allow intimidation to succeed. I was weaned on "Cry The Beloved Country."

I got curious about AIPAC. As I dug around, the rest of the equation of oppression began to lay itself out before me: the U.S. tax dollars that prop up the Zionist enterprise.

Some years later, when we entered into the agreement with ITVS, we stipulated in the contract that no public information about *People and the Land* would be released without our express permission. Important advice to anyone working on a project about this topic: keep quiet until you're done. Talking to the papers is like taping a "kick me" sign on your behind.

One interesting aspect of the contract with ITVS is that their projects are at no charge to the PBS system for a period of three years. And only PBS. As producers, Riad and I have no rights to license broadcast or cablecast of the program anywhere in America until the year 2000. This would not have become a problem if the PBS system had picked up the program, or if ITVS had handled itself more carefully.

ITVS submitted *People and the Land* to PBS for national release in February 1997. Gayle Loeber, Director of Broadcast Marketing for ITVS, called some time afterward to inform me that PBS had "declined the program." "Declined, what do you mean declined? What's their reason for declining?" Gayle cut me off, "They are not required to provide a reason."

She went on to describe the next steps in the distribution plan: submit for PBS's Point of View series and, if that failed, up-link. ITVS would prepare press materials and arrange a satellite feed to all 283 PBS affiliate stations. This is called a soft feed. A hard feed is PBS core programming, prime time series and specials. Stations, at

the discretion of the individual program directors, can air any of the dozens of "soft feeds" they receive each week.

The relationship with ITVS, never warm on account of the 18 months they had me swinging in the wind, deteriorated further over the first press release. I had worked by phone and fax with ITVS in preparing it. Their first draft omitted mention of the foreign aid issues that the program starts and ends with—the essence of the program. I wrote a brief paragraph to remedy this defect, they said "fine," and (I thought) we put the project to bed.

When I got my press copy in the mail, the following text had been deleted from our final draft: ". . . *People and the Land* carries this humanist perspective into a look at U.S. involvement in the Israeli occupation comparing Israel aid figures with cuts in human service programs for American citizens—\$5.5 billion dollars in aid to Israel, \$5.7 billion in cuts to human service programs."

I called ITVS. "What's up with censoring my press release?" I was told by a staff member that Jim Yee, Schott's replacement as Executive Director, had called for the copy cut.

In May ITVS called to say that some of the stations requested additional information about the program and would I write a statement about why they should air it? What I was not told was that ITVS had requested Mark Rosenblum, founder of Americans for Peace Now, to review the film. ITVS didn't ask anyone else to review the film. No Palestinian view was solicited, no American historian, just Mark Rosenblum.

ITVS sent this review to every programming director in the PBS system. An introduction signed by Gayle Loeber states that, "Mark is uniquely qualified to comment on this program . . ."

The review, using asterisks to emphasize some words, proceeds to firebomb the film with Zionist mythology: "approximately 20% accurate," "97% of Palestinians are *ruled* by *Palestinian* authorities," and—in a true flight of imagination—"Actually Jews [in Palestine] represented . . . the demographic *majority* since 1870." The document bears a striking resemblance to the ooze that rolls out of the Government Baloney Factory in Jerusalem. A sort of Joan Peters pocket novella.

[Editor's Note: The Link contacted Mr. Rosenblum on Nov. 12 to confirm his connection with Americans for Peace Now. He emphatically denied having written a "review" or having put any comments in writing for ITVS, although he said he had expressed certain opinions orally to someone at ITVS whose name he did not recall. He was aware that ITVS had cited him as the authority for the "review" on People and the Land that it distributed in May to all PBS stations. Told that he was quoted as saying the documentary was "20 percent accurate," Mr. Rosenblum said he had not stated any percentage of accuracy. He specifically denied saying that 97 percent of Palestinians are ruled by Palestinian authorities (explaining that he might have said that such would be the case if the Oslo Accords were fulfilled). He also

repudiated the statement regarding the majority status of Jews in Palestine in 1870. (He said that he might have remarked that Jews had attained majority status in Jerusalem by the turn of the century.) On Nov. 13, The Link reached Suzanne Stenson, formerly of the ITVS staff, who said she had transcribed Mr. Rosenblum's comments on a laptop computer during an hour-long phone conversation. Ms. Stenson told The Link that prior to its dissemination to PBS stations, the text of the communiqué quoting Mr. Rosenblum was e-mailed to him for review at his personal and business e-mail addresses. No response to these e-mails was received, she said.]

When the Anti-Defamation League sent out its press release expressing outrage that CPB had funded *People and the Land*, ITVS sent a very thoughtful letter to Abraham Foxman at ADL, and sent copies of ADL's condemnation of the program to every station in the system.

Now check me on this: is sending out an utterly negative review of a program a 90s promotion technique that I'm not sharp enough to appreciate? Orwellian promotion: war is peace, promotion is sabotage.

I asked Jim Yee and Suzanne Stenson of ITVS why ITVS had become a mailboy for the ADL. Public agitation by the ADL would have raised the profile of the program and widened the debate, raising censorship and free speech issues. When ITVS delivered the message, ADL's hands were clean and the desired results were achieved without public discourse.

These ITVS/ADL/Rosenblum tactics have scored hits. At least one station that we can document, WTIU in Bloomington, Indiana, removed *People and the Land* from its schedule following the communiqués from ITVS. Other stations, in Cleveland and Philadelphia for example, rejected member requests to air the free program by referring to the ITVS material.

These aggressive ITVS "promotion" techniques are ominous when you consider that they have a broadcast lock on the program for three years. However, there have been some victories for information and the "marketplace of ideas." Twenty-three stations have broadcast so far. Many of those screenings were the result of grassroots organizing.

Arab Americans of Central Ohio (AACO) conducted a campaign that resulted in the program's being aired in a prime time slot on the PBS affiliate in Columbus. AACO's approach constitutes a worthy model for the like-minded:

Step 1) Organization calls the Director of Programming

at the local PBS affiliate to ask when *People and the Land* is going to be broadcast, and how could the group help to promote the program? (Rather than approaching the issue from an adversarial perspective, assume the station will do the right thing.)

Step 2) Members of the organization sign on, *en masse* if possible, as supporting members of the station.

Step 3) Organization's board members meet with the Director of Programming, the General Manager, or both if necessary, expressing their concern that their community is under-represented and under-served by the station's programming. (Emphasize that diversity is the issue, not who can field the most "friends of the station.")

Step 4) If successful in getting the program aired, organization members call to thank station management for its commitment to quality and diversity in programming. (Then encourage more of the organization's members to become station members.)

The decision to air or not to air *People and the Land* in any of the 283 communities served by

PBS rests in the hands of two people, three at the most: the Program Director, the Station Manager, and the General Manager. It's not a "System" — it's two or three people with phone numbers and offices. ITVS provides the tape free of charge, so the "broke station blues" is not a valid excuse.

Program directors who express ignorance about where to obtain the program can be reminded that ITVS can be reached at 415-356-8383 or by e-mail at <itvs@itvs.org>. Lois Vossen, Manager of Marketing and Promotion, is the contact person for stations.

The production crew, our colleagues, and friends in Palestine have gone to some lengths to create this information resource. Are there enterprising and energetic people out there who will run the blockade at the 260 PBS affiliate stations that are still sitting on the program?

For those about to rock, we salute you.



Treated at al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza for gas inhalation, Palestinian youngsters become part of Hayes's project to document such incidents.—Photo courtesy of Foglight Films.

Notice

Sabeel, an ecumenical Palestinian Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, holds its third international conference Feb. 10-15, 1998, in Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

On Feb. 10, an optional tour will be offered to the Sea of Galilee, the Mount of the Beatitudes, destroyed Palestinian villages, and Israeli settlements. Feb. 11 begins with an optional tour of the Old City and a keynote address by Edward Said.

The original *Link* issue used this page to list books being offered for sale at discount prices by Americans for Middle East Understanding. Please consult AMEU's book catalog elsewhere on this website.

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Confronting Library Theft

[Reprinted from the Fairfield (CT) University newspaper, The Mirror, Nov. 6, 1997]

Three times in the last eight months, *The Link*, a periodical that Nyselius Library has received for over twenty years, and which features many articles that cover Middle Eastern affairs from Palestinian and Arab perspectives, has been stolen from the Library shelves.

On each occasion the thief or thieves have not only taken the current and back issues for the entire year, but have torn the title label off the shelf. The thoroughness and repetition of these thefts strongly suggest an ideological motivation.

After each theft, the publishers of *The Link* have graciously provided Nyselius Library with replacements, and will continue to do so should these thefts continue. The Nyselius Library staff are currently keeping a set at the circulation desk in addition to the one on the designated shelf.

The theft of any library material is of grave concern since it limits the availability of materials to the University community. This repeated and targeted theft is particularly outrageous because it runs counter to Fairfield University's mission and is a violation of free expression.

The Faculty Library Committee condemns these thefts. We would ask for the support of students, faculty, staff and administration as we endeavor to prevent further acts of vandalism.

[Signed] William M. Abbott, Chair; James Estrada, Philip A. Greiner, Ingeborg E. Haug, Martha S. LoMonaco, Eugene T. Murphy, Gary H. Weddle

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Americans for Middle East Understanding, Inc.
Room 245, 475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115-0241