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AN AMERICAN FEMINIST IN PALESTINE

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The *Intifada* Years

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PALESTINE

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SHERNA BERGER GLUCK

Temple University Press

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Contents

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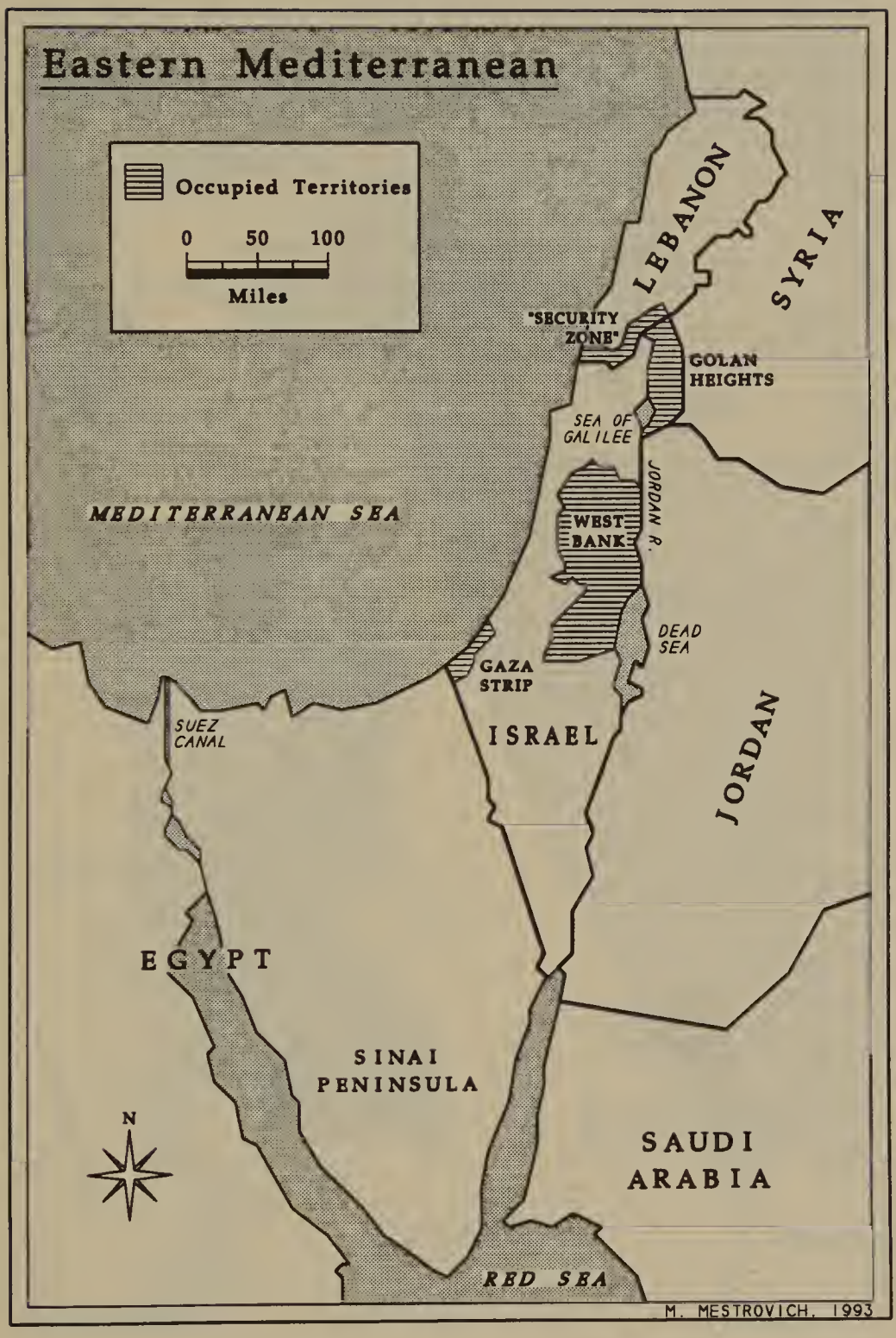
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M. MESTROVICH, 1993


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INTRODUCTION

The almost two dozen Palestinian children giggled and squirmed as they clasped each other's hands and formed a large circle in the barren assembly hall. Dwarfed by the room, with its expanse of shiny wooden flooring, the four- and five-year-olds settled down as the first chords were struck on the piano. I watched them move slowly in a circle, stopping on the appropriate beats to gesture with their arms or dip to the floor. There was something hauntingly familiar about the melody and refrain of their "Refugee Song." It took me back to my own childhood in Chicago, to songs about the land and the olive trees in some far-off place. Just about the time I had so innocently sung those songs in a Zionist youth group, the families of these children were being driven off that land, away from those olive groves.

That moment of recognition stunned me. I began to think about how a rabbi's little blond daughter from Chicago had ended up in the West Bank listening to the songs of Palestinian children at an orphanage and child-care center.

As early as I can remember, perhaps even before I started attending *cheder* (Hebrew school) at the age of five, I used to watch my father seated at our dining-room table on Saturdays teaching the Talmud to young rabbinical students. In rhythmic sing-song recitation, they would debate the various interpretations of Hebrew law contained in the books of the Talmud. As young as I was, I was fascinated by their intensity and intellectual engagement. Even though the substance of those debates eluded me, and I have since forgotten much of my early Hebrew education, I retained the memory of discussions of right and wrong, just and unjust, fair and unfair. The social consciousness emerging from these concerns came to symbolize for me what it means to be a Jew.

I used to attribute my political activism to this foundation, but now I wonder whether perhaps it was not just as much a product of my being an outsider, the "other." For I was a Jew in an unfriendly environment. The name Sherna marked me as different. In those days, most children had very

conventional names, and in the public school I attended, where there were few Jewish children, the other girls had names like Mary and Sue and Peggy. Mine was an Americanized version of my great-grandmother's name, Charnia.

Some cousins lived in my apartment building and my grandparents lived across the street, but there were few other Jews in the West Side Chicago neighborhood where we lived until I was nine. The first time I can recall being allowed to go to the home of a non-Jewish schoolmate was for a Halloween party when I was about eight years old. It was a completely foreign world to me, and I felt alone. I had never seen anyone bob for apples or pin a tail on the donkey.

Except for a few gentile playmates who lived in the building across the way, my world was very self-contained—and Jewish. Periodically, however, the protective shell was pierced, like the day I was playing alone on the concrete strip between the two buildings whose wooden back stairs faced each other. The clotheslines zigzagged above our heads, but the space was wide enough for us small children to play ball or hide-and-seek. Chasing the red ball toward the basement steps where it had rolled, I was suddenly confronted by two large rats. I screamed, and my mother came out on the porch to see what had happened. I could barely hear her comforting words over the voice of a neighbor on the second floor who was shouting from her porch, "Shut that kike kid up!"

At the age of eleven, when I had completed six years of after-school *cheder*, I was sent to a parochial school for the seventh and eighth grades. I loved the learning process, but I was beginning to wonder whether there was a God. The fact that my father had since left the rabbinate and my parents were no longer observant made me feel like an outsider among my religious classmates. They were puzzled by my growing rebelliousness and shocked by the way I taunted the history teacher by pretending to chew gum—an act that usually resulted in my being banished to the hall. Despite my growing estrangement from my classmates, they were the only friends I had. There were no girls my age in our neighborhood and, in any event, I had few free daylight hours during the school year. The only social life available to me consisted of the Saturday Zionist youth meetings. Dancing the *hora* (a folk dance that, as I learned only recently, is derived from the Palestinian *dabke*) and singing folk songs were an enjoyable pastime, and I gave little thought to what any of it really meant. It was many, many years later that I came to realize that in 1948, as we were singing and dancing and celebrating the creation of Israel, 800,000 Palestinians were becoming stateless refugees.

San Francisco was still the stronghold of the "beats" when I moved there with a college friend in the early 1950s. I worked at an insurance company on weekdays and listened to poetry in the North Beach beat hangouts on the weekends. While the denizens of San Francisco ignored the beatniks, or found them amusing, they were less tolerant of radical political thought. McCarthyism had taken its toll, and even the Berkeley campus was relatively quiescent when I returned to college one year later.

Nineteen years old and impressionable, I was enthralled by the intense political and intellectual debates that raged at Sather Gate Coffee House. I was the youngest and one of the few women in the group of mainly Jewish activists and intellectuals who occupied one corner. In my trench coat and monochromatic brown or blue outfits, I was hardly the picture of a 1950s Berkeley coed. In an era of poodle skirts, sororities, fraternities, loyalty oaths, and ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps), none of us really fit in.

We plotted how to end the campus rule banning political speakers, argued about the betrayal by professors who signed the loyalty oath, and raged against militarism. Our first target was ROTC, and we planned a demonstration for Armistice Day—what we now call Veterans Day—of 1954. It was an utter fiasco. To the taunts and jeers of other students, a dozen of us valiantly picketed the men's gym, where the ROTC training was conducted. We bravely endured the pouring rain until the red poster paint on our signs started to run down our arms. My political resolve was replaced by concern that the London Fog trench coat on which I had splurged my meager savings would be ruined.

As the specter of Joe McCarthy faded and the political climate on campus relaxed a bit, we marshaled around other issues, including U.S. foreign policy. Though many of us were Jews, we rarely talked about the Middle East. Two years later, in 1956, when I entered graduate school at the University of California in Los Angeles, I still didn't know anything about the Palestinians. Then the Israeli, British, and French invasion of Egypt following Gamal Abdel Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal became a hot topic among the new group of politically engaged friends I had made. I hadn't given much thought to Israel since my preteen Zionist youth days, and it had remained relatively immune from criticism among my circle of friends, but the 1956 invasion of Egypt made it too controversial to ignore. Perhaps that is why I selected as a seminar topic the treatment of "Oriental" Jews in Israel.

My research for this seminar revealed to me a history different from the one I had learned. For the first time I discovered that when the British laid

the foundation for a Jewish state in Palestine in 1917, 93 percent of the population were Arabs, not Jews.[1] The knowledge I gained made me increasingly uneasy about the virtue and wisdom of an exclusive Jewish state. In private, I began to argue for a single, secular democratic state in Israel/Palestine.

It wasn't until the 1967 war that I first felt compelled to show support for the Palestinians. Not knowing what to do or where to turn, I asked the advice of the Arabs who ran a gas station where I regularly stopped on my way to work. The only thing they could suggest was that I send money to UNRWA.[2] My action remained private. Like so many of my generation, I was reluctant to speak out publicly. We had been raised under the specter of anti-Semitism and the lesson of the concentration camps. My only relatives who had been directly affected by the Holocaust were very distant ones, but I distinctly remembered the tattooed numbers on their arms. There were also my own memories of being stopped by anti-Semitic bullies with knives as I walked to *cheder.* My secularization over the years had not caused me to abandon my Jewish identity, and I heeded the unspoken dictum that in the face of anti-Semitism Jews had to stick together, remain silent.

As critical as I had become of Israel after the 1967 invasion of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip,[3] nothing quite prepared me for the horrors of the invasion of Lebanon in 1982—and especially the massacre of as many as two thousand Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.[4] How could Jews collude in this cold-blooded extermination? My husband, Marvin, and I wondered whether this was the ultimate victory for Hitler—turning the victims into executioners. Resolving to break our silence, though still with great trepidation, we wrote a letter that was published in the *Los Angeles Times.* I was prepared for the few hate calls my husband and I received but

1. The Balfour Declaration, which was actually a letter from Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild in 1917, declared the British government's "sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations" and committed the government to "use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object." See the Historical Chronology.

2. The United Nations Relief Works Agency was established initially as a temporary agency to provide material aid to the fleeing Palestinians in 1948. It has become the major source of assistance for these refugees, particularly in the camps in Occupied Palestine and in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

3. During the 1967 war, the Israelis also captured the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt and the Golan Heights from Syria. The Sinai was returned in 1978, under the Camp David Accords, and the future of the Golan is being negotiated.

4. Estimates of casualties vary from a figure of 700–800 used by the Israeli government to as many as 2,750 calculated by the Red Cross. The Lebanese government figure is set at 1,962.

was taken completely by surprise by the support I received from people I ran into on the campus where I taught.

Five years later, the *intifada* pushed me to shed my last bit of reluctance to speak out against Israeli policies.[5] The Palestinian uprising against the twenty-year-old Israeli occupation reversed irrevocably the David and Goliath metaphor that the Israelis had promoted. Palestinians, armed only with stones, were taking on the mighty armed state of Israel. In retaliation Israeli soldiers teargassed and shot Palestinians, placed them under curfew with no access to food, and—under orders of then Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin—even broke the bones of young children. The drama that started to unfold in the muddy lanes of Jabalya Refugee Camp on December 9, 1987, soon spread to the streets of every town in the West Bank and Gaza. The brutality of the Israeli response was undeniable, and for the first time in forty years the Palestinians received favorable world attention.

Over the course of the next year, I heard and read about the less visible face of the *intifada:* the consensus form of governing among the members of the coalition that made up the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU),[6] the popular committees that had sprung up in neighborhoods to meet the everyday needs of people, and the health groups that had launched massive first aid training. Even before Ibrahim, a representative from one of the health committees visited our campus, I had been entertaining the idea of joining one of the group-sponsored tours to Occupied Palestine.[7] Ibrahim's account of the daily resistance, the institution building, and the women's activism made me consider such a visit more seriously. The announcement a few weeks later of a year-end tour sponsored by the Jewish Committee on the Middle East (JCOME) could not have been more timely.

For a full week I debated the idea with myself and with my husband, Marvin. At first he had no interest in joining me. Perhaps he was simply not prepared to face the reality of Israeli occupation. Finally, he decided to come along, "to take photographs for your slide show." I was delighted that he would share this experience with me, just as I had shared with him

5. The *intifada,* usually referred to as the "uprising," literally means "shaking off."

6. The Unified National Leadership was composed of an equal number of representatives from each of the major political factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) active in the West Bank and Gaza. In most political contexts the major groups at least (Fateh; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine; and the Communist party, now called the People's party) would all be considered political parties.

7. When I speak of Occupied Palestine, I am referring to the portions of Palestine that remained in Arab hands up to the 1967 war: the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem.

a journey to Rumania to try to find any trace of his mother's eleven brothers and sisters who had been killed in the Holocaust.

Six weeks later, after numerous phone conversations with Mounira, the Palestinian who would meet us in Jerusalem and lead the delegation, Marvin and I boarded a plane in New York with the other two members of our group. Ronald Bleier, a mid-forties high-school teacher, was born in Yugoslavia after his family fled the Holocaust. He was seeking ways to bring discussion of the Middle East into the schools. Eileen Neumark, slightly younger than Ron and an old friend of JCOME founder Mark Bruzonski, was interested in developing interactive communication programs to promote understanding between Israelis and Palestinians, especially children.

Eileen, Ron, and I all had putative goals that were quite task oriented. Only Marvin, a free-lance writer and my partner of thirty-three years, had no stated plan of his own. Strangely, none of us admitted—to each other or even to ourselves—that our underlying motivation probably had more to do with resolving the complicated feelings we had as Jews who supported the Palestinian cause. Perhaps at the time none of us was even aware of it. But in the course of that trip to Occupied Palestine, I began an emotional journey that I had not anticipated.

I should not have been surprised. My evolution as a feminist activist had followed a similar course. Perhaps as an outgrowth of the talmudic discourse to which I was exposed in my childhood—the search for a just solution to a moral dilemma—I am driven initially by rational, political choices. The emotional response always comes later.

It had never occurred to me as a child listening to the men debate the Talmud at our dining table that I might be excluded because I was a girl. The fact that one of my *cheder* teachers was a woman also seemed quite natural. I loved learning; in fact, my peculiar notion of beauty was to look like a bookworm. Much to my mother's astonishment, I enviously pointed out every little girl who wore glasses.

During the seventh grade, when I first began parochial school, construction was not yet complete on the permanent school site, and we had to attend classes at the *yeshiva* (the school where rabbinical students were trained). The dour, bearded rabbi who taught the religious classes stuck us three girls in the back of the room. He spoke in Yiddish and I did not have the vaguest notion of what was going on. His inexplicable rages against us confounded me, but I never connected them with our being girls. I simply

decided that he was deranged. In response, I became increasingly rebellious and was frequently locked up in the large coat closet.

Years later, during my Berkeley activist days, when my friends and I jokingly charged our compatriots with male chauvinism, it was more a reflection of our occasional annoyance at them than real anger. We felt that we were different from other women and could hold our own. We did not really have the language to express it then, much less an analysis.

In those early years, the only time that I connected emotionally with how badly women were treated was when I had to go through the grueling process created by the legal and medical establishment to obtain an abortion. After weeks of poking and prodding both my body and my psyche, the male doctors turned down my plea for a legal abortion. Apparently I was too healthy and not crazy enough to be granted their approval, so I sought an illegal back-room abortion from a "de-frocked" doctor. He refused to allow a friend who accompanied me there to stay with me through the process. To hold back my screams from the excruciating pain I felt as he performed the D and C with no anesthetic, I bit my lips and tried to concentrate on the strains of country music wafting up from the bar downstairs. All the while, he spewed out a stream of pornographic jokes. As if that experience were not humiliating enough, a week later the doctor in the emergency room at Kaiser Hospital called the police when I came in seeking medical assistance for severe hemorrhaging. For the next several months I endured the unrelenting questioning of the Berkeley police.

The pain of my experience remained buried for more than fifteen years, until the 1970s, when I joined a small consciousness-raising group in which we shared our personal experiences. Then the floodgates opened. The blossoming feminist women's health movement in Los Angeles tapped into my long-suppressed anger about how I had been treated, and for the first time in my life I felt a bond with *all* women and began to think about my own experiences differently. So the rabbi at the *yeshiva* who raged at me was not a lunatic, after all; he was expressing the sexism that permeated Judaism. And my abortion experience was not just my own personal nightmare.

I was also at a critical juncture in my professional career. The research project on alcoholic tuberculosis patients that I had directed for eight years had ended, and I was not at all certain about my future. I consumed one book after another on the new women's history. The day it dawned on me that some of our recent past could be preserved through oral history, I

knew what direction I wanted to take. In October 1972, when I set off with my tape recorder to interview a 104 year old suffragist and early birth control activist, I started on a course that enabled me to combine my scholarship and my politics. But it was not easy to fund an independent project, and in 1977 I started teaching part time in women's studies at California State University, Long Beach, where I established the oral history program.

The uprising launched by the Palestinians in December 1987 provided the impetus for me to speak out more publicly against Israeli occupation. At the same time, the television images of women in the early days of the *intifada* captured my feminist imagination. The scenes were reminiscent of Algeria twenty-five years earlier, as memorialized in the film *Battle of Algiers.* Older women wearing the traditional *thaub* (a long dress, usually embellished with embroidery around the yolk, sleeves and hem) were hauling buckets of stones for youths to throw at the soldiers, or even engaging in tug-of-war with soldiers who were trying to arrest the children of the *intifada.* Younger women joined their male counterparts in stone throwing, and small girls flashed smiles and the ubiquitous "V" for the news photographers.

I learned about the less visible activities of women in the *intifada* from Palestinian-American women who had visited the West Bank. Women there were organizing neighborhood food distribution, establishing underground classes during the long enforced school closures, and learning how to treat the effects of tear gas inhalation and injuries from rubber bullets and beatings. From Jewish women who were returning from visits to Israel, I got a glimpse of Jewish Israeli women's resistance to the occupation. Shortly after the beginning of the *intifada,* women dressed in black started to stand on a street corner in West Jerusalem every Friday holding aloft signs calling for an end to their government's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The spirit of both Palestinian and dissident Israeli women inspired me. To record it, and perhaps to find my own niche—a place where I could be an observer yet play a role that might be of some value—I planned to stay past the end of our official group tour in January 1989 and interview the leaders of the Palestinian women's movement and the leaders of the Israeli women's peace movement. Initially, and as an outgrowth of a feminist perspective so common in the West that assumes a transcendent gender solidarity, I thought of this project in parallel terms: Palestinian and Israeli women in resistance.

Our eye-witness tour immersed us in life under occupation and left me feeling quite overwhelmed. It was one thing to see pictures of Deheisheh or Jabalya refugee camps and quite another to slog through the muddy lanes avoiding the patrolling soldiers; it was one thing to hear reports about demonstrators shot by soldiers and another to see their wounds; it was one thing to read casualty figures and another to go to a wake for a youth shot at the funeral of his friend. After a full week of seeing the victims of Israeli violence and hearing the eloquent pleas of Palestinian national leaders, my ability to travel with impunity inside Green Line Israel felt like a betrayal.[8] After all, this was where many of the Palestinians who had offered us hospitality had once lived, places from which they were now often barred even temporary entry.

I was becoming convinced that it was not only artificial but also politically deceptive to draw parallels between the activism of Palestinian and Israeli women. As much courage as it took for Jewish Israeli women to stand up to the Israeli government and challenge the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, it could not be compared to the risks taken by the Palestinians. And no matter how much Israelis were vilified for the opposition to their government, they lived in the land of the occupiers not the occupied. Although I joined the Israeli Women in Black demonstration in West Jerusalem in January 1989 and interviewed one of the group leaders, I scrapped my original plan for a parallel Palestinian and Israeli women's project. Eventually, over the next several years, I accepted each group on its own terms and befriended Israeli activists as well as Palestinian activists. That process became part of another journey I made, and the Israeli activists became important to me in personal terms.

What had started in December 1988 as simply a trip to learn firsthand about the Israeli occupation of Palestine and about the women's movement there was transformed very quickly into an emotionally charged journey. The little I learned during that first visit about the vast network of alternative institutions that the Palestinians were building intrigued me. It was a society in flux, where boundaries were being challenged and social relations were being redefined. With no fossilized government to constrain them, Palestinians were creating their society anew. It reminded me of the social experimentation in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, though we risked neither life nor limb and had the freedom to act on our visions without facing arrest. Their backyard gardening projects and agricultural cooperatives were reminiscent of the neighborhood food cooperative that

8. The term Green Line Israel refers to the pre-1967 border.

I had helped to start in my own community. The work of the health committees, the underground classes, and women's small-scale economic cooperatives mirrored, to some extent, the feminist health projects, the women's liberation classes, and the carpentry collectives we had spawned at the Women's Center. And the research centers that were being envisioned recalled the Feminist History Research Project with which I had launched my career as an oral historian.

My second visit, in June 1989, partially satisfied my curiosity about these social experiments, but as some of my questions were answered, new ones arose. I wanted to get past program descriptions and to understand better how both the *intifada* and the women's movement were affecting the daily lives of ordinary people. And so I returned a third time at year's end, 1989, and spent almost a month meeting mainly with women. Instead of being judgmental, trying to determine how much priority they placed on gender issues (as I was inclined to do in my earlier meetings with the educated, urban women leaders), this time I simply listened to what village women were telling me about their lives and their aspirations.

I had to speak with most of the village women through interpreters, usually more educated women's committee members who accompanied me. My role as a sympathetic outsider was sometimes liberating both for the village women and for me. I did not merely assume that everyone would marry, that all women wanted children. Rather, I asked women about their plans. Sometimes their answers surprised my translators. My conversations with the women did more than help me to appreciate more fully the way their feminism and nationalism were linked.

My three trips provided me with more than enough material for my writings and lectures. However, I could not ignore the major shift in mood and the changed conditions resulting from the United States–led war in the Gulf. And so I returned again in July 1991.

Invitations to talk about the *intifada* and about the women's movement have taken me to many different settings and have exposed me to a wide array of responses, including personal assaults and affronts by other Jews. Zealots have taunted me with the accusation, "You are not a real Jew" and have sent scurrilous letters about me to my university. Strangely, these have been easier to deal with than the subtle forms of anti-Semitism that have sometimes surfaced as a result of my talks. It is not easy to pin down, but certain attacks on Israel or references to the Jewish lobby—instead of the Zionist lobby—make me cringe. Explaining the distinction between Zionism and Judaism, or between Zionist and non-Zionist Israelis—distinctions that Palestinians themselves readily make—usually does not help. Knowing

that these attitudes are deep-seated and that my graphic accounts of Israeli treatment of Palestinians did not spawn them does not eradicate my feelings of guilt. Perhaps that is why it is so hard to break the dictum against speaking out, against criticizing other Jews.

Especially rewarding have been my talks on Palestinian women, in which I can pull together the various strands of my own politics and identity. I try to inform people about Israeli occupation and Palestinian resistance to it and simultaneously challenge their stereotypes of Arab women. The process has made me increasingly sensitive to the complexity of acknowledging difference, yet not rendering difference into "otherness."

It is in this context, too, that I can bring to Palestinian-American audiences the message of Palestinian women, using their own words to clarify how the cause of women's liberation has become embedded in the national movement. Many Palestinian-Americans are frozen in time, retaining the attitudes of a society that they left over forty years ago. Others are members of the next generation who are struggling against traditional patriarchal values. Even in the darkness of the room, as I show my slides and speak, I can feel the spark of recognition as many women nod their heads in agreement with the words of the Palestinian women whom I quote. Even the men in the audience, though they usually sit rigidly, their arms folded across their chests, sometimes seem to concur.

Jewish men and women in my audiences tend to behave differently from each other, too. Those who come to my talks because they are deeply concerned about the Israeli occupation seem equally racked by doubt, confusion and moral outrage. But their reactions are disparate. The women are most often reflective, sometimes tearful, as they freely express the pain they feel. The men more frequently strike a pose of cool rationality, wanting to debate the historical record with me. Really, they seem to be arguing with themselves, trying to sort out their thoughts, but they are often reluctant to admit this. It seems difficult for us Jews to shed the mantle of history that has convinced us that we are always the victims, always the just.

Despite my secular identity, my Jewish upbringing has formed a basic core of my being, and it has been hard to come to grips with what is being done to another people in the name of that tradition. Initially, like my three traveling companions on my first trip, I was so enraged that I found it difficult even to think of going into Green Line Israel.

Conversely, whenever I heard Palestinians referring to Israeli soldiers as "the Jewish" (the English version of the Arabic *yahud*), I cringed. Perhaps

they were simply replicating the conflation of Zionism and Jewish identity that Israeli leaders like Menachem Begin had promoted. What upset me even more was the graffiti that equated the Star of David with the swastika. I view this symbolic equation as an attack not on Israel but on all Jews—a violation of the usual Palestinian practice of distinguishing between Zionists and Jews.

While I deeply resent the political uses of the Holocaust by the Israeli establishment to justify Zionist expansionism, I also object to the flattening of distinctions by the Palestinians. The crimes that have been committed against the Palestinians for the past forty-three years, and that continue to be committed, are unconscionable. Their enormity is not diminished if they are not the same as the crimes committed by the Nazis against the Jews. Some Palestinians with whom I discussed this point agreed, others vehemently insisted on the parallel; and still others did not realize that the Star of David signified more than the state of Israel. The Palestinian equation of the Star of David and the swastika continues to trouble me, as does the success with which the Israelis have appropriated it and made it a symbol of nationalism.

I was captivated by the graciousness, hospitality, and warmth of the Palestinians, but as I spent more time with them I romanticized them less. I could see their flaws, disagree with them, and even criticize them, yet remain tremendously fond of most of the people I met. Although I never got over my discomfort at the strict gender segregation I sometimes encountered, I came to terms with it and learned not to impose my own Western feminist assumptions on Palestinians. My growing sensitivity and their decreasing defensiveness made my conversations with Palestinian women mutually productive. Just as I learned to see the Palestinians as ordinary mortals, the friendships that I gradually developed with several Israeli women peace activists helped me to move past my anger and to see Israelis, too, as multidimensional people.

My initial goal in going to Occupied Palestine was simply to observe the situation firsthand so that I could be more effective in speaking out as a Jew against Israeli occupation. But I also look at the world through my feminist lens, always asking where the women are and how they are experiencing events. As a result, although my view of the *intifada* is a broad one, women are at the center, not on the margins. This is also a very personal exploration of the *intifada*, shaped by the complicated and sometimes confusing intersections of history and culture with my own politics and background.

Reconstructing my experiences and reactions was not terribly difficult. What turned out to be much harder was the public disclosure of my personal journeys. I had not given much thought to the question of my Jewish identity for many years. It was simply something that was there, contained mainly in a repository of memories that were both pleasant and unpleasant. Yet, my encounters in Palestine have forced me to spend a great deal of time thinking about that identity and about Jewish chauvinism. I also had to come to terms with residual ethnocentrism, especially with a lingering suspicion of Islam. The contradictions between my intellectual perspective and some of my visceral reactions—particularly as a feminist—continued to surface.

My journeys over the course of the three years from 1988 to 1991 took many forms. I traveled by van, by bus, and most often by *servis,*[9] from the hills of Hebron to the sea in Gaza, in blistering heat and blowing snow. Some places I only passed through, stopping briefly; others I returned to many times, renewing and deepening friendships. The mood of the people and the shape of the *intifada* varied, particularly between my first three trips before the Gulf War and my visit following it. I have tried to convey the changes I observed both in the attitudes of the Palestinians and in my own thinking—the shift from an exuberant hope and optimism to a more sober and critical appraisal.

9. The seven-passenger jitneys are referred to by the French name *service,* the pronunciation of which is rendered best by the phonetic spelling *servis.*

The People

People figuring prominently in this book are listed here alphabetically by first name, except for public figures, who are cross-listed by first and last name. Page number in parentheses refers to first appearance. Hebrew and Arabic proper nouns have been transliterated without diacritics.

Abdul Shafi, Haidar—Gaza physician, head of Red Crescent Society in Gaza, who became head of the Palestinian delegation to Middle East peace talks (49).

Abu Rahme, Faez—Gaza lawyer, PLO representative (47).

Ali—Kufr Nameh guide, former schoolteacher, accountant for agricultural cooperative member (85).

Amal—Kufr Nameh women's committee member, wife of Ali (131).

Amina—German-Palestinian working with Women's Action Committee, interpreter in Kufr Nameh (135).

Assia (Abou-El-Haj Habash)—Director, Childhood Resource Centre, sister of Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, California State University Long Beach (CSULB) colleague (115).

Ayad—Kufr Nameh youth (84).

Ayda (Essawi)—Resident of Issawiyeh. Women's Action Committee activist, currently director of committee (91).

Bassam Shaaka—*See under* Shaaka.

Deutsch, Yvonne—Social worker, one of the coordinators of the Israeli group Women in Black (64).

Eileen Kutaub—*See under* Kutaub.

Fadwa—Member of Issawiyeh ceramic workshop, activist in women's committee (90).

Faez Abu Rahme—*See under* Abu Rahme.

Giacaman, Rita—Bethlehem-born professor at Bir Zeit University, Director of community health unit (60).

Haidar Abdul Shafi—*See under* Abdul Shafi.

Hani (Essawi)—Journalist, resident of Issawiyeh (92).

Hindiyeh, Suha—Founder of Women's Studies Centre, Jerusalem (60).

Hirsch, Rabbi Moshe—"Foreign minister" of Neturei Karta, orthodox anti-Zionist group (104).

Ibrahim—Health-care activist, frequent guide, scheduler (72).

Jawdat—Bethlehem journalist, guide on Jewish Committee on the Middle East (JCOME) trip (24).

Jean-Paul and Jocelyne—Political visitors from Lyons, France (72).

Kamal, Zahira—Founder in 1978 of first women's committee, Federation of Women's Action Committees, Jerusalem (58).

Kathy (Bergen)—Canadian-born Mennonite human-rights worker (70).

Khadija—Supervisor of Issawiyeh ceramic workshop (89).

Khalil, Sameeha Umm—Founder, head of Inash al-Usra (Society for the Preservation of the Family) (54).

Kutaub, Eileen—Sociologist, Bir Zeit University; coordinator, Women's Studies Committee, Bisan Research Centre (211).

Luwahez—Palestinian activist inside the Green Line, resident of Lod (123).

Maha Mustaqlem Nassar—*See under* Nassar.

Mahmoud and Hiba (Sadeh)—Residents of Deheisheh Refugee Camp. Refugees (1948) from the village of Zakariya (30).

Mohammed (Barakat)—House painter, trade unionist, hotel clerk, served as driver for JCOME delegation (24).

Rabbi Moshe Hirsch—*See under* Hirsch.

Mostafa Natshe—*See under* Natshe.

Mounira—Palestinian-American leader of JCOME delegation (23).

Nabil (Sadeh)—Deheisheh Refugee Camp resident. Son of Zakariya refugees (31).

Nahla—Kfur Nameh resident. Regional organizer for Women's Action Committee (136).

Najjab, Selwa—Gynecologist, member of Palestinian Medical Relief Committee (76).

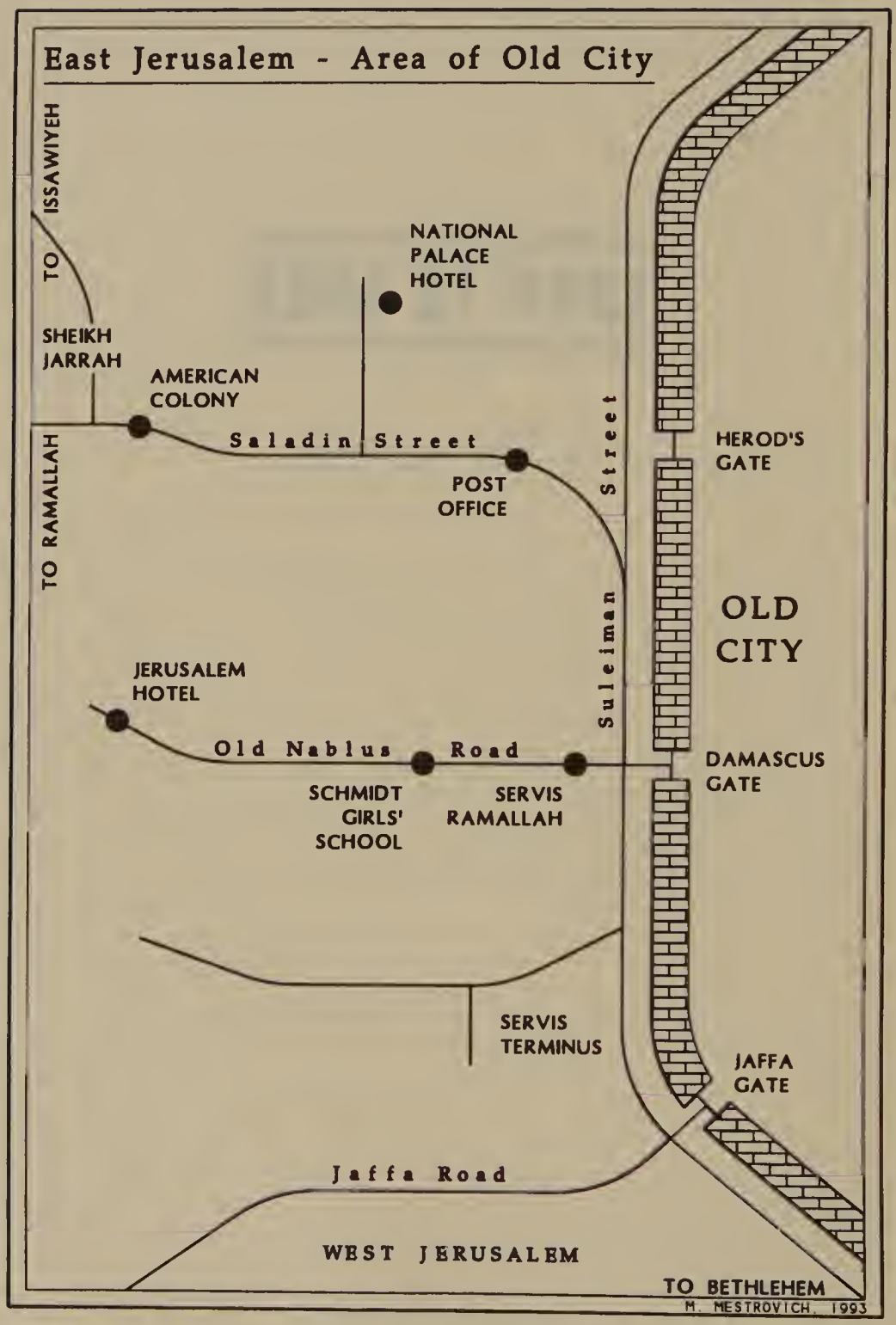
Nassar, Maha Mustaqlem—Schoolteacher, Union of Palestinian Women's Committees leader (57).

Nassim—Kfur Nameh activist, former political prisoner (84).

Natshe, Mostafa—Deposed mayor of Hebron, engineer (35).
Parnass, Tikva—Israeli activist, Women's Organization for Political Prisoners (WOPP), staff member of Alternative Information Centre, Jerusalem (105).
Rana Nashashibi—School counselor, leader, Union of Working Women's Committee (59).
Rawda—Kufr Nameh resident, member of women's committee, wife of Nassim (130).
Rayna (Moss)—Tel Aviv journalist, translator, activist (109).
Rihab (Essawi)—Issawiyeh resident, educator, Bethlehem University (183).
Rita Giacaman—*See under* Giacaman.
Saeb—Regular at National Palace Hotel, East Jerusalem. Bir Zeit lecturer, shopkeeper (160).
Sameeha (Umm Khalil)—*See under* Khalil.
Samir (Abou-El-Haj)—Bir Zeit chemist, hotel manager.
Selwa Najjab—*See under* Najjab.
Shaka, Bassam—deposed mayor of Nablus, victim of Israeli terrorist attack (41).
Siham—Member of Issawiyeh ceramic workshop on pregnancy leave in June 1989; younger sister of Fadwa (90).
Suha Hindiyeh—*See under* Hindiyeh.
Suhara—Jabalya Refugee Camp women's committee leader (95).
Tikva Parnass—*See under* Parnass.
Tsemel, Lea—Jewish Israeli lawyer known for her defense of Palestinians.
Yusef—Kufr Nameh resident, husband of Nahla (136).
Yvonne Deutsch—*See under* Deutsch.
Zahira Kamal—*See under* Kamal.
Zam Zam—Mother of Issawiyeh activists (90).

1988 TO 1990

A Time of Hope


East Jerusalem - Area of Old City
TO ISSAWIYEH
NATIONAL PALACE HOTEL
SHEIKH JARRAH
AMERICAN COLONY
Saladin Street
POST OFFICE
Suleiman Street
HEROD'S GATE
TO RAMALLAH
OLD CITY
JERUSALEM HOTEL
Old Nablus Road
DAMASCUS GATE
SCHMIDT GIRLS' SCHOOL
SERVIS RAMALLAH
SERVIS TERMINUS
JAFFA GATE
Jaffa Road
WEST JERUSALEM
TO BETHLEHEM
M. MESTROVICH, 1993

DECEMBER 25, 1988, TO JANUARY 8, 1989

Arrival

It was Christmas Eve and the terminal at Ben Gurion Airport in what is now called Lod, outside Tel Aviv, was a mass confusion of passengers and baggage. As I stood in front of the curly, black-haired Sephardic Israeli immigration clerk, waiting for her to check my passport, I realized that I could have mistaken her for a Palestinian. Her head was bowed in concentration, and she looked up at me and glared momentarily when I requested that she not stamp my passport.[1]

Outside, the confusion was even greater, as hundreds of people pressed against a barricade, shouting to attract the attention of those they had come to meet. Dazed, we pushed our heavy luggage carts up an incline. A striking woman, who looked very much like the Sephardic immigration clerk, spotted Eileen and elbowed her way through the crowd to greet us. Mounira, the Palestinian-born American who was leading our group, was an intense woman in her late twenties. Her rapid-fire description of the trip to the airport barely gave us time to exchange more than simple introductions. Her excitement, we were to discover in the course of the next week, was more about rediscovering her own roots than about the trip on which we were about to embark together. Only five years old when her family fled their home on the Mount of Olives after the 1967 war, Mounira was beginning a journey of her own.

1. The request not to have one's passport stamped is both a political statement and a pragmatic act. Except for Egypt, no Arab country will permit entry to the holder of a passport with an Israeli stamp.

We pushed the luggage carts through the rain to a waiting Volkswagen van. Mohammed Barakat, whose van would become our major means of transportation for the next week, introduced himself simply as "Mike." One of the few Palestinian men who did *not* have a mustache, Mohammed, a Jerusalemite, had been a painter by trade. However, since the only painting contracts still available were in the Jewish settlements or in Israeli West Jerusalem, in the spirit of the *intifada* he had sought other work. Mohammed split his time between clerking at the National Palace Hotel and serving as a driver for a children's project.

The Green Line separating Israel from Occupied Palestine is invisible. We passed no border markers or checkpoints as we drove from the airport and crossed from Israeli West Jerusalem to Palestinian East Jerusalem.[2] But there was a distinct difference between the two sides. The Israeli side looked like a city that had gone to bed, with some stragglers still on the street, some stores still lit. The Palestinian side looked like a ghost town with no inhabitants left, a reflection of Palestinian life since the beginning of the *intifada,* when "normal" activities, including movie-going, restaurant dining, and other forms of entertainment were curtailed.

Jawdat, the Bethlehem based journalist who would serve as our guide, was waiting for us at the National Palace Hotel and led us to the downstairs restaurant as soon as we washed up. Later we discovered that he had not come to the airport because he carried a "green card," the identity card issued to those who were forbidden to cross into Green Line Israel.[3] A solidly built, jovial man in his early thirties, Jawdat wears a perpetual, somewhat enigmatic smile. He speaks so softly that you have to lean close to hear him.

We were too tired and jet-lagged to make much sense of the schedule that Mounira and Jawdat proposed to us over dinner, and we were eager to stretch our legs and get some fresh air. Walking around a strange place for the first time at night is always foreboding. The dark shadows cast by the few street lights seemed particularly ominous, and Marvin, Ron, and I were reluctant to wander too far from the hotel on the deserted wet sidewalks of East Jerusalem.

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2. Although the Israelis annexed East Jerusalem after the 1967 war and consider it part of Israel, only South Africa, El Salvador, and Costa Rica have recognized the legitimacy of this annexation.

3. The "green card" is issued to anyone who has served time in prison.

A light drizzle was falling, and the city was just beginning to awaken as dawn broke, our first day in Occupied Palestine, Christmas 1988. The streets around the hotel, which had seemed so threatening the night before, looked completely harmless in the light of day. Sleepless from jet lag, Marvin and I walked the few blocks to the Old City.[4]

The stone walls were glistening in the rain, and the quiet beauty of the ancient city was not yet broken by the hawkers. The morning still belonged to the cats, who sniffed around for scraps of food and lapped at the edges of small puddles—the cats and the pairs of Israeli Border Guards who slouched against the walls.[5]

The nonchalant poses of the soldiers belied their true role in the Old City, a role that became increasingly apparent as the flow of traffic through Damascus Gate began to pick up. Young girls in checkered uniforms, rushing down the narrow lane heading for school, jostled bread sellers, their carts loaded with fresh loaves of pita bread. Still sleepy-eyed, the school girls looked surprised as the soldiers stopped them to examine their book bags.

Watching this routine, I recalled my own girlhood and the time that four youths—only slightly younger than these Israeli soldiers—had stopped me on the side street near our apartment. "Where are you going?" they asked me. "To the library," I answered. Grabbing my books and examining them for the telltale Hebrew letters, they asked, "Are you Jewish?" "No," I lied, fearing their knives and remembering earlier episodes when boys like them had jumped us on our way to *cheder.* The youths who had terrorized me were local hooligans, brought up on a diet of anti-Semitism. Being subjected periodically to these acts of harassment was part of growing up in Chicago—at least in the 1940s.

For these girls in Jerusalem, the daily intimidation was part of their growing up in Occupied Palestine. But rather than facing the occasional menace of individual bullies, they were confronted regularly by officially sanctioned armed men—the soldiers of the occupying army. School offered no escape. When the Israeli authorities did allow the schools to remain open, they were often invaded by tear gas-wielding soldiers. At those

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4. When I refer to the Old City, unless otherwise specified, I am talking about the walled Old City. The adjacent area is also known as the Old City.

5. There are several kinds of uniformed military personnel that police the Occupied Territories. In East Jerusalem, for the most part, it is the Jerusalem Police and the Border Patrol—many of whose members are Israeli Palestinian Druse. In other parts of the West Bank and in Gaza, army units of the "Israeli Defense Forces" (IDF) are deployed as the occupying military force.

times the girls fought back, their usual restraint transformed into undisguised rage.

On our way back to the hotel we noticed three Border Guards sprawled casually on the steps of the post office on Saladin Street in East Jerusalem. They leaped to their feet when they spotted two approaching Palestinian youths laden with plastic bags of fruit. Two of the soldiers nabbed the young men and roughly flung them against the wall, forcing them to assume spread-eagle positions, their hands on the ledge above them. Watching from across the street, we could see the two youths pull their hands back from the ledge as a third soldier, standing above them, stomped on them with his boots. After delivering several kicks, the Israeli soldiers allowed the Palestinian youths to stand "at ease" while they examined their identification cards. That routine accomplished in a cursory fashion, the soldiers let the cards drop to the ground, forcing the young men to kneel down in submission in order to retrieve them. The Border Guards waved the two youths away but kept their bags of fruit, to which they promptly helped themselves. Looking up, they noticed us across the street, cameras held to our eyes. Showing no shame—in fact, the opposite—they mounted the ledge and performed a "bump and grind."

I had seen incidents of police brutality in Los Angeles, been intimidated by the Guardia Civil in Franco-era Spain, and had been frightened by armed personnel carriers creeping along the streets in Lima, Peru. Still, the scene I witnessed outside the East Jerusalem post office set in motion a rage that took me totally by surprise and that surfaced repeatedly during the next ten days.

The Rooted, the Uprooted, and the Transplanted

The area known as the West Bank is the portion of historic Palestine wedged between the west bank of the Jordan River and the Green Line demarcating Israel. Following the UN Partition Resolution in November 1947, and especially after April 1948, more than 750,000 Palestinians (out of a total population of 1.4 million) were either expelled or fled their homes in the area that Israel occupied.[1] *The 425,000 who sought refuge in the West Bank overwhelmed the resident population of 360,000. Jordan annexed what came to be known as the West Bank following the 1948–1949 war, and the Palestinians there remained under Jordanian control until the Israeli invasion and subsequent occupation in 1967.*

The majority of the 1.8 million Palestinians living there now are Muslim, with a Christian population of approximately 10 percent.[2] *The uprooted—the refugees and their families—live mainly in the twenty-seven refugee camps established by UNRWA (UN Relief Works Agency for Palestinian refugees) initially in 1949. After seven years, when their repatriation seemed increasingly remote, the refugees moved from the tents in which they had been housed to the small concrete block houses built by UNRWA.*

Immediately after the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and began to build Jewish settlements there. Palestinian lands were also expropriated for settlements along the Jordan river and in the Gaza

1. For more information, see the Historical Chronology.

2. Despite much lower earlier Israeli figures, a very thorough census conducted by the East Jerusalem-based Planning and Research Center found that the population of the West Bank at the end of 1992 was 1,806,796.

Strip. The settlement program was stepped up following the election of Menachem Begin in 1977. As part of the Likud campaign to capture "Judea and Samaria," settlements were established throughout the West Bank, including sites close to the major Arab population centers. Israel also began to confiscate urban properties for Jewish settlement. Today, the Jewish settlers—transplants from as far away as Brooklyn and Moscow—number more than 230,000 (including those in East Jerusalem).

Deheisheh Refugee Camp, where more than 20,000 uprooted Palestinians, mainly Muslim, make their homes, is just a few kilometers from Bethlehem. It is in a hilly and relatively barren region. While Bethlehem and the communities surrounding it are predominantly Christian, al-Khalil (Hebron), the historic city further to the south, is a Muslim stronghold. It is the city the settler-ideologues of the Gush Emunim movement are trying to wrest from the Palestinians in their drive to create a "Greater Israel."

Even though I am not a Christian, the sheer weight of history promised to make Christmas Day in Bethlehem special. Israeli travel boosterism had promised Christmas lights and hundreds of choirs filling Manger Square in historic Bethlehem. However, for the second consecutive Christmas after the beginning of the *intifada,* the Palestinians had refused to cooperate and had curtailed the traditional festivities. One lone platform riser was set up next to the Church of the Nativity, where the previous evening a foreign choir had caroled, and a single pine tree was decorated with the few feeble lights strung up by an Israeli boy scout troop. Inside the church Palestinian Christians were crowded together, celebrating the birth of Jesus.

As we stepped outside the church into the light drizzle, a group of young children went rushing by us, down the nearby steps, chased by a dozen or so soldiers clutching their rifles, their fingers on the trigger. In their haste, the soldiers dropped several rounds of live ammunition. Marvin and I stared at each other in amazement as we retrieved one of the live rounds. Were the soldiers really going to shoot the young boys who had just thrown stones at the police station?

Deheisheh Refugee Camp

The soldiers in Bethlehem looked neat and trim in their red berets and clean uniforms, and they paid little attention to the few foreigners who were there. In contrast, the soldiers patrolling Deheisheh Refugee Camp looked unkempt, unshaven, their uniforms caked with mud. They kept an eagle eye on us as they slogged along the muddy path between the six-foot-high barbed-wire fence surrounding the camp and the twenty-foot-

high chain-link fence next to the highway. The inner fence was put up to keep in the residents whenever the authorities declared a curfew; the outer fence was to keep in the stones that were thrown from the camp at the passing cars of Israeli settlers.

The main entrance near the UNRWA school was blockaded by concrete-filled barrels, as were all of the other roads. The refugee camp, established over forty years ago as a temporary refuge, had become more like a prison. Soldiers were constantly patrolling the streets of the camp as well as the perimeter, and during the regularly imposed curfews people could be shot if they left their houses.

Despite the occupiers' efforts to keep journalists and foreign delegations from penetrating the camp, the Palestinians born and raised there, like our guide Jawdat, could always find a way to escort them in. Once we were out of sight of the soldiers, Jawdat led us up a muddy slope into the interior of the camp. As we raced along several narrow, slippery streets to our destination, I noted that it looked like a poor, neglected, crowded town or village. The nine-by-ten-foot block houses built by UNRWA as separate family dwellings practically touched each other. Some families, especially those who had a member working in the Gulf, had expanded their cramped original quarters, and most had managed to add a bathroom and a kitchen.

We followed Jawdat quickly and silently, rushing up the steps of one of the larger houses. A young boy ushered us in. Jawdat had simply told us we were going to a house where a man had been killed. Although we all had heard and read stories about the killings of Palestinians, we were appalled by the story the thirty-four-year-old woman told of her husband's death. We kept asking questions to make sure that we were understanding correctly. To complicate matters, our Palestinian translators were talking to each other excitedly in Arabic. But with patience and persistence, we finally heard the details of the death of Ibrahim Odeh.

He had returned from Saudia Arabia, where he had been working, to spend the summer with his family. His wife was pregnant with their eighth child. May 9, 1988, like the ninth of every month, was a general strike day to commemorate the beginning of the *intifada*. When he heard a commotion out in the street, the father became concerned for his children's safety and went to the window. As he stood beckoning them to come into the house, he was shot through the head by a high-powered rifle. His skull was shattered and blood splattered over the entire room. Traces of it were still visible on the walls. The residents of the camp believe that he was hit by an Israeli sharp-shooter firing from a cherry-picker on the hill across from the camp.

As the woman told the story of her husband's slaying, her three-month-old infant, born four months after her father's death, sat on her lap. Her three year old sister sat beside their mother, looking pensive, her eyes downcast. Jawdat beckoned her over and sat her on his knees, caressing her hair in a soothing gesture. She lowered her head and mumbled:

> They put flowers on my father's grave. They [carried] him on [their] head, and they took him to bury him. . . . There was blood on the ground.

After the killing, whenever she saw the soldiers, she would yell at them: "You shot my father!"

The fourteen-year-old son took up the story where his mother left off, beckoning us to the window where his father had been standing, pointing to the neat bullet hole, protected now by a metal plate. After the shooting, passing soldiers took turns throwing stones at the window—perhaps trying to shatter evidence of the crime. The family had replaced the original wooden front door with a heavy steel one to thwart the break-ins by the soldiers.

Shaken by the account we had heard, we were relieved when Jawdat signaled to us that it was appropriate to take our leave. We followed him silently through the camp, hoping that we could make it to his uncle's house without being stopped by the patrolling soldiers. A formal curfew had not been declared, but the army had a propensity for arbitrarily declaring an area a closed military zone, especially as a way to keep out foreign observers. They probably would have done no more than expel us from the camp, but Jawdat might have been detained and even imprisoned again.

The seven of us crowded into the six-by-ten-foot living room of Jawdat's aunt and uncle, Mahmoud and Hiba Sadeh. The room was furnished in the traditional style, with mats along three walls. It was so narrow there was no space between the mats and the low table in front of them. Two straight-backed chairs and a television with a videocassette recorder deck at the opposite end of the room were the only other furnishings. A small electric heater barely took the chill off the concrete-block building. Like most families in the camp, the Sadehs lived and breathed the *intifada,* and a European documentary, "Revolution of the Stones," was playing on the VCR when we arrived. It continued to play in the background as we talked, occasionally attracting the attention of our hosts and of the Palestinians who were accompanying us.

As fifty-seven-year-old Mahmoud Sadeh settled in to tell us the story of the mass exodus of the people of Zakariya forty years earlier, his wife and

eldest son pulled up the two chairs to listen to a story they undoubtedly had heard countless times. No sooner had the elder Sadeh begun his account, explaining how the Irgun and Stern gangs had attacked the villages in the vicinity of Lydda (Lod) and Ramleh,[3] than his son, Nabil, interrupted to point out that Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir had been members of those terrorist gangs.[4] Mahmoud Sadeh resumed recounting how the local villagers had sold their jewelry and other precious possessions to buy weapons. "And when they were attacked, the villagers fought back," he proclaimed proudly.

Lowering his voice, and with great disdain, he described how the arriving Jordanian and Egyptian Arab armies assured the villagers that they would protect them and took their weapons. "This spelled the end," he lamented as he reported how the Egyptian troops withdrew four kilometers behind the village when the aerial bombardment began. Shortly afterward, the monastery in front of the village was taken by the advancing Jewish forces.[5] When news of the killing of five villagers hiding in the hills reached them, and as they began to hear stories about the massacre of entire villages, the people of Zakariya started their mass exodus, joining those fleeing from Ramleh and Lydda.[6]

Mahmoud's family went to a village near Hebron, where they stayed for a couple of months before coming to Deheisheh. Chronicling those early days with gallows humor, Mahmoud laughed: "We were vaccinated for everything: filth, scorpions, snakes. We had so many vaccinations that even today we never get sick." Even after he and his wife moved from a tent to the small block house allocated to them, they initially had no kitchen and shared a single water tap and six toilets with thousands of other camp residents.

Ten years later, in 1967, when Israel invaded the West Bank, soldiers came through the camp beating people. Fearful that it was a replay of 1948,

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3. As if to erase the historical memory of these events, the Israelis changed the name of Lydda to Lod.

4. Menachem Begin was the former head of the Likud-led government. Yitzhak Shamir was the current prime minister.

5. Before the formation of the state of Israel there were many different military units, all of which were later incorporated into a single army.

6. Almost every refugee recounts how the story of the (April 9, 1948) massacre of the villagers of Deir Yassin spread like wildfire, fueling people's fears and leading to the mass exodus from their homes. By all accounts, this Irgun action included the murder of hundreds. The figure of those killed was initially set at 250, but a recent Palestinian study by the Bir Zeit University Center of Documentation and Research now places the number at a maximum of 120.

many families fled again, including members of Mahmoud's extended family. Granted permission by UNRWA to take over their five separate, concrete-box-like houses, he was able to expand his living space. Their quarters might be jerry-built and meandering, but at least now the Sadehs have enough space to accommodate their extended family, including their eldest son, Nabil, and his wife and children.

Proudly showing us his domain, Mahmoud led us outside through the rain and into the other section of his living quarters. The fiberglass roof between the two sets of buildings did not really provide much protection from the elements, but he seemed oblivious to this minor inconvenience. Entering another building, we passed Hiba, who was kneeling on the floor of the entryway, just off the kitchen, making bread over an electric pan. The living room in this building, furnished with a large overstuffed couch and chair, was less cramped than the one in which we had been sitting. A door along one wall led to a large room where piles of green olives were being dried; another door led to a bedroom in which mattresses were stacked high.

It was not until Jawdat appeared with a chicken that we understood we had been invited to stay for lunch. His aunt had already been preparing pigeons for her family. The family raised them in a little coop between the two buildings, both as a hobby for Mahmoud and also as part of the *intifada* campaign to encourage self-sufficiency. The chicken Jawdat bought helped to expand the meal to accommodate the seven extra mouths. And in honor of the holiday and the foreign visitors, Hiba prepared a special rice dish.

When the electricity went out shortly before 1:00 P.M., the already chilly temperature in the living room plummeted. Hiba, accustomed to this regular cutoff of power, did not miss a beat. She simply took her bowl of dough to the brazier that Jawdat had set up under the fiberglass roof and continued to bake the bread over the fire. We took turns joining her and Jawdat to warm ourselves over the glowing coals.

Hiba brought in a large platter laden with chicken, pigeon, and rice, and in traditional style we scooped up the morsels with the fresh, flat bread. We savored the special meal that had been prepared for us, and for a few brief moments the cold room, the leaky roof, the curfews, the almost constant presence of the soldiers with their arbitrary demands could be ignored. But politics was never far from any of our minds, and it was not long before a very heated exchange flared between our driver, Mohammed Barakat, and Nabil. They were both house painters and about the same age; one was a refugee, the other a lifelong resident of Jerusalem. Both Jawdat and Mounira were out of the room, and the two men were so wrapped up

in their political debate that it was hard to get Mohammed to pause long enough to tell us what was being said.

It seemed that he, along with Nabil's father, was arguing for a two-state solution. Nabil, a second-generation refugee, was holding onto the dream of a single, secular democratic state for both Jews and Palestinians. He insisted that a two-state solution meant they would never return to their home in Zakariya; they would always be refugees. The two teenage children in the family had joined us by then and sided with their father. Hiba was not in the room, so I asked the children what their mother thought. The family members on each side of the argument were convinced that she agreed with them. I chided the men mischievously for never having asked her opinion before. When she came into the room and answered their question, Nabil was not at all surprised that his mother agreed with him, nor did it seem like news to Mahmoud. It seems that they did know her opinion, after all. I was the one who should have been embarrassed, for jumping to conclusions.

It turned out that Nabil had a rudimentary command of English, and when our Palestinian translators left the room, I pressed him further. Haltingly he told me: "I [will] not leave Deheisheh until I [can] return to our home in Zakariya. I don't care [if] this means my children are born and stay here, or even their children." His father had mellowed, as had most of his generation of refugees. They were tired and believed that the formation of a separate, independent Palestinian state alongside Israel was the best they could hope to achieve.

It helped, I suppose, that Mahmoud Sadeh had been able to reestablish a connection with his land. The Iraqi Jew who now lived there had a working relationship with him. The olives on the land inside Green Line Israel were harvested by the Iraqi and cured by Mahmoud. They then split the profits, although it is questionable how equitable this arrangement was. For Mahmoud, the olives spread out on the floor in the adjoining room were a fond reminder of his land; for his son, they were an irritant, a marker of the land that was no longer his. As Nabil and I continued our conversation, it became clear that despite his ideological position, Nabil had resigned himself to accepting a pragmatic solution.

Our day with the Sadeh family offered us an intimate glimpse into Palestinian life. But the tale of their experience, along with the encounters we observed in Jerusalem earlier that morning, the story of the killing of Ibrahim Odeh, and the sight on our return route to Bethlehem of the hulking shell of an apartment building that the Israeli authorities had

demolished,[7] left me feeling numb. I had read reports of deaths, injuries, and demolitions, as well as accounts of the 1948 refugees, but these had been abstractions. Seeing the real people, hearing their voices as they told their own stories, drinking coffee and eating with them, made their pain more concrete.

Everything had happened so rapidly that there had not been a moment to process it all, to give a name and shape to my feelings. We had been going from place to place, packed into a car, driving through rain and dense fog, with little geographical orientation.

Chilled and exhausted, I tried my best to be cordial and visit with the family with whom we were staying that night. Like most of the residents of Bethlehem, they were Christians. George owned a grocery shop, but as a result of the commercial strikes and of reduced tourism, he had fallen onto hard times. He did not complain about the hardships that resulted from the *intifada* itself; instead he told us how he had put his car up on blocks rather than continue to pay the many license fees and taxes that the Israelis imposed on the Palestinians—taxes for which they received virtually no services in return. His quiet, individual act of noncooperation was not unique. Throughout the West Bank middle-class families did the same, and in nearby Beit Sahour massive tax resistance had become the norm.[8]

We conversed with George, the only member of the family who spoke English, and played with his three children until it was polite to excuse ourselves. Marvin and I were too tired to share our reactions to all that we had experienced in a mere twenty four hours, and we both fell into a deep sleep almost immediately. By 3:00 A.M. we were both wide awake. Donning more layers of clothing to ward off the near-freezing temperature, we huddled together in one of the narrow twin beds and talked.

George's house almost butted up against one of the concrete walls of Aida Refugee Camp, and we could quite distinctly make out the voices broadcast through the loudspeaker mounted on the minaret of the mosque

7. From the beginning of the *intifada* on December 9, 1987, to January 31, 1993, 2,072 houses had been demolished or sealed by the Israelis, some because they were built without permits—almost impossible for the Palestinians to obtain from the Israeli authorities—others because an occupant, or a relative of an occupant, was alleged to have thrown a molotov cocktail at Israeli soldiers.

8. Particularly galling for the merchant class was the value-added tax (VAT) on all merchandise and services in the Occupied Territories, which was imposed by the Israelis in 1976 as a means of financing the budget of the Israeli military government. Resistance to payment of VAT, especially, became one of the tactics of the *intifada*. In turn, as the tax revolt spread, the Israelis made the granting of all permits and licenses, including auto licenses, contingent on the payment of all overdue taxes.

next door. The previous evening, the Israeli soldiers had appropriated it to bark curfew orders to the residents. As daylight broke, it had returned to its rightful use and we could hear the muzzein's call to prayer. These different voices emanating from the mosque symbolized for us the difference between the camp residents next door and our Christian hosts. The Christians of the Bethlehem region had roots there dating back almost two millennia, but the refugees living there had been uprooted from their homes in what is now Israel.

Hebron

Mostafa Natshe, the Muslim businessman-engineer of Hebron who had served as the deputy mayor of the city before the Israelis deposed him,[9] shares a destiny with his fellow Muslims in the nearby villages. And during the early days of the *intifada,* when the extended curfews created a virtual food embargo on the countryside, he went cross-country by donkey to deliver food and supplies. Peasant and professional, both are at the mercy of the Israeli occupying authorities and have to request permits—rarely approved—to pursue their occupations: the businessman to build a new cement factory, the farmer to dig a well. All the restrictions on movement and on daily life, we were told, mean "that all Palestinians are in one big detention center."

The feeling of being hemmed in is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the city of Hebron itself. When we arrived there, Israeli soldiers manning barricades prevented our passage into the heart of the Old City. We parked some distance away and headed for the marketplace. A large four story block building, Hadassah House, seized by Jewish settlers of the Gush Emunim movement in 1979, dominates the narrow lane. Despite initial criticism of the illegal seizure, the Israeli government ultimately sanctioned it and now protects the building with razor-wire in front and armed soldiers on the building across the way.

The rooftop location of the military post is the site from which Palestinian marksmen shot six Jewish settlers in May 1980. Ironically, the now boarded up Palestinian shops below belong to descendants of families

9. Municipal elections were held throughout the West Bank in 1976, and nationalist leaders were swept into power. Two years later, following the signing of the Camp David Accords, the elected municipal leaders in the West Bank formed the National Guidance Committee in order to coordinate the response to the policies of the Likud government. The mayor of Hebron was deported in 1980, and in 1982 the NGC was banned, and the remaining eight West Bank mayors, as well as the mayor of Gaza, were ousted by the Israelis.

who had provided a safe haven to Jews in the past. In 1929, during the massive Palestinian protests against the increased immigration of European Jews and against land purchases by Zionist settlers, Jews were attacked in several cities. In Hebron, many members of the small community of orthodox Jews who resided there were killed. The rest ultimately were driven out, but before then the ancestors of the shop-owners across the street from Hadassah House had shielded many of them from danger.

The Israeli army now protects the Jewish settlers from Palestinians, but little control is exercised over the settlers during their frequent rampages through the market. Not only do they have complete freedom of movement, but curfews are clamped on the Palestinians regularly to enable the settlers to hold celebrations in the street. The most infamous of these was probably the welcoming back of Gush Emunim leader Rabbi Moshe Levinger on his release from prison. He was freed after serving only three and a half months for killing a Palestinian shop owner—only one of his several assaults on Palestinians.[10] The old stone house in which he lives in the heart of the marketplace is topped by large Israeli flags and armed soldiers.

Palestinian shopkeepers and shoppers alike greeted us with suspicion, even signs of open hostility, as our little band wandered through the rain-soaked market. Jawdat, usually mellow, became increasingly nervous and rushed us along. Ignoring Mounira's pleas to slow down and enjoy the sights and smells, he herded us to the end of the market area and into a ceramic workshop at its edge. There were too many questions being asked, he explained to us once we were safely inside.

Peering out the door of the ceramic shop, the full weight of the settler presence became even more obvious. There, across the street—at the base of the hill topped by the fortress containing the tombs of Sarah and Abraham—was a large sign marked The Settlers Gift and Craft Center. A fund-raising project of the sprawling Kiryat Arba settlement on the outskirts of Hebron, the shop is more a symbol of the contest for land between these mainly transplanted Jews and the resident Palestinians than it is the symbol of peace proclaimed in its other sign, *Shalom* Gift Center.

After walking past the glaring Palestinian men in the marketplace, I was relieved to spend time inside the workshop. I watched Palestinian workers,

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10. In September 1988 Levinger fired indiscriminately on pedestrians in downtown Hebron after his car was stoned in the area. Kayed Salah, a forty-two-year-old shop owner was killed, and three other Palestinians were injured. Manslaughter charges were dropped, and instead Levinger was sentenced to five months in prison and a seven-month suspended sentence for "causing death through negligence."

their heads covered with the traditional *kuffiyah* (black and white checked head scarf), hand painting the Hebrew word *shalom* on the plates they were producing for the Israeli market—perhaps even for the settlers' gift shop across the street—a poignant reminder of how the Palestinian economy had been destroyed.

A few days later, on the road to Nablus, the view from the highway revealed the contrast between the different occupants of the land: the rooted, the uprooted, and the transplanted. In the foreground, jammed together in neat rows, broken only by the rubble that marked the houses demolished by the Israeli authorities, were the small UNRWA-built concrete-block buildings of Askar I and II refugee camps. Beyond them, set into the gentle contours of the land and marked by the minaret in the distance, was an old village with its golden colored stone buildings. Further away, at the end of a new asphalt road, the large white block buildings and water tank of an Israeli settlement loomed atop the bulldozed hill.

Nablus: Death and Destruction on the Mountain of Fire

The northern city of Nablus, with its population of eighty thousand, was the capital of the northern area of Palestine and also served as its major commercial center. The city is wedged between two mountains, with the Casbah and the older buildings of the city nestled in the narrow valley floor. The newer houses climb the hillside from the center of the city, while the opposite slope, rising behind a large prison, appears uninhabited. The terrain is steep and rocky.

Its history of militant nationalism has earned Nablus the name "Mountain of Fire" (Jabal an-Nar). And since the beginning of the intifada, *it has more than lived up to its reputation. Nevertheless, while it has been in the forefront of challenging different colonial powers, it has retained relatively conservative social values.*

It was the first bright, sunny day, since we had arrived, clear enough so that we finally could follow our route and make out the surrounding countryside. Heading north out of Jerusalem toward Nablus, we began a cat-and-mouse game with the soldiers at the roadblocks. Mohammed's van carried the yellow license plates of Jerusalem, so we were waved through with no questions asked.[1] But as soon as the soldiers were out of sight, the *kuffiyah* was draped across the front of the dashboard to announce our identity to Palestinians, who otherwise might bombard the vehicle with

1. Yellow plates normally signified a vehicle from inside the Green Line, or one belonging to settlers. However, since the Israelis annexed Jerusalem and considered it part of Israel, even Palestinian residents of Jerusalem were issued yellow plates.

stones. When the *kuffiyah* went up, off came Mounira's beret, which might be mistaken for a soldier's.

Halfway to Nablus, at the sight of a roadside stall, Jawdat became very excited and signaled Mohammed to stop. The basket vendor there, Jawdat informed us, had just been released from prison. The two men embraced warmly, and the man recounted his story of beating and detention. With great embarrassment he displayed the wounds to his stomach and groin area, a punishment he received for having skillfully woven the pattern of the forbidden Palestinian flag into one of his baskets. While he spoke with us, he kept a nervous eye on the road. We shared his fear that an Israeli army patrol might come up over the rise behind us and subject him to even more harassment.

We did not drive through the center of Nablus on the way to al-Ittihad Hospital. Instead, we avoided the roadblock at the entrance to the city, detoured past the large prison, and headed uphill.[2] A couple of young boys appeared to be lounging about as we made the next turn. Their casualness belied their role as the eyes and ears of the *intifada,* and as soon as they were able to get a good look at us—a necessary assessment because of our yellow license plates—they gave an all-clear signal to their compatriots up ahead.

Al-Ittihad, one of two private hospitals in the Nablus area, is an obligatory stop on any tour of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. An old, ill-equipped facility, it reminded me of Cook County Hospital in Chicago forty years ago. The hospital was crowded with shooting and beating casualties of the *intifada,* young and old, male and female. While the older victims were angry and bitter, there was still a kind of innocent sweetness about the younger ones, like the ten-year-old and the twelve-year-old who shared a room with several adult patients. Both were victims of high-velocity bullets. The younger boy had a cast on his arm, the older boy, one on his leg. Nuzzling up against his cast-covered leg was the spotted white hospital cat the boys had adopted. Posing for a picture, the ten-year-old grabbed a newspaper and carefully folded the front page to display a photograph of Yasir Arafat. With his free arm he made the "V" sign.

Their good humor and high spirits were a welcome antidote to the mood in most of the other rooms. One man in his mid-thirties became so agitated when he told his story that we could barely follow it. Apparently, he had tried to intervene on behalf of his father, whom the soldiers were forcing to paint over graffiti. The soldiers would not relent, and during the

2. There are three prisons run by the occupying Israeli government, and only one government-run hospital.

argument that ensued they began to beat not only the son but also his wife and father. A pink-robed woman was stoic as she told her story. Soldiers had come charging into her house, chasing her two sons who had been participating in a demonstration just outside. She watched in horror as the twenty-year-old was killed. When she tried to shield her other son, the mother took a bullet in the arm. The shattered bones were still not mended some three months later, and her arm was in a cast. She was less concerned about herself, she told us, than about her surviving son, who had been carted off to jail by the soldiers and from whom she had heard nothing.

As irate as people became when they recounted their experiences with the Israeli soldiers, their rage toward the Palestinians who collaborated with the occupiers was much deeper. In the pay of the Israelis, these collaborators not only informed on their neighbors regularly, but they often used the weapons the Israelis had provided them to do their bidding. We met four members of a family who, between them, had sustained five bullet wounds when they confronted a collaborator who had chopped down 150 of their olive trees.

People told their stories freely even though there was an air of apprehension in the hospital. Raids by Israeli soldiers in the early days of the *intifada* had taught the patients and staff that it was not a safe haven. There was no way to prevent these incursions, but the clusters of youths stationed on the street corners watching the traffic could at least give early warnings.

The visits to the wounded helped us to see the flesh and bones behind the statistics of *intifada* casualties; but it was hard to shake the uncomfortable feeling of being a voyeur as the patients exposed their wounds and their amputated limbs and recounted their experiences. Ultimately, Eileen and I became too uncomfortable, and we fled the small crowd gathered around the bed of a shooting victim. I understood that these public recitations helped to sustain people's will and courage and knew that their stories were important in mobilizing international support. Yet I never fully crossed what I felt was a cultural divide; I remained uncomfortable with the easy acceptance and even celebration of "martyrdom." Thinking about it now, as I write, I have to ask myself why I react so differently to the Palestinian celebration of martyrdom than to the selfless acts of others, such as of Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney, the American civil-rights workers killed in Mississippi in the 1960s. Does it represent remnants of Orientalism that I have not yet shaken off, an ethnocentrism that has blinded me to the parallels between these selfless acts, a lingering hostility to Islam?

The contrast between the crowded, archaic rooms of al-Ittihad Hospital

and the modern, comfortable hilltop home of Bassam Shaka was sharp. But he, too, was a victim of the violence that rocked the region. In 1980, when he was serving as the mayor of Nablus, both legs were blown off as a result of an explosive device set in his car. The Israeli settlers who were the perpetrators of this act and of the simultaneous attempts on the lives of two other West Bank mayors received very short sentences. They might very well have been among the men from a nearby settlement whom we had seen earlier strutting down the streets of Nablus, their Uzi submachine guns slung over their shoulders.

The wheelchair in which our host sat as he held court with our delegation seemed more like a throne. A soft-spoken man with a gentle demeanor, he could display humor about his own scrape with death. Commenting on what he called the "murder" of his legs, he joked, "Now I am closer to my land."

Despite the comforting warmth that enveloped us as we sat drinking coffee in his heated, well-appointed home, it was hard to shake off a sense of danger. Everyone in the room tensed visibly at a sonic boom—everyone except our host, that is. Later, when we heard the radio calls blaring from the Israeli army jeep circling outside, we exchanged nervous glances. Only after we became alarmed by a loud knocking at the front door did our host playfully tease us. The only sign of his own reaction to these familiar sounds of occupation was his wordless fingering of the string of amber worry beads that he held in his blanket-covered lap.

As we were leaving Bassam Shaka's house, a young man approached us and invited us to attend the wake of a recently slain youth. We had not noticed the youthful "public information officer" at the hospital—another set of eyes and ears of the *intifada*—and were taken by surprise when he approached us. We hesitated, still discomfited by these public displays of personal grief, but finally decided to accept the offer and drove to a nearby neighborhood, where many youths were wandering the streets. When our guide noticed that Eileen, Mounira, and I all chafed at his announcement that the women had to go to another location down the block, he decided that maybe it was all right, after all, for these foreign women to join the men. In retrospect, I am sorry that we did not join the women, too.

Young men—boys, really—escorted us down a long flight of stone steps, all the while nervously glancing up toward the street. Each had attached to his shirt a photo of the slain youth, Nasser Hawwash, framed by the colors of the Palestinian flag. Simultaneously proud of their friend, who was considered a martyr, and fearful of the consequences should the Israeli patrols spot this illegal gathering, their anxiety was evident as they hurried us along.

This simple ritual in honor of the dead young man could have been raided at any time, and all the participants, including the foreign guests, could have been arrested. It clearly violated both the prohibition against gatherings of more than ten people and that against the display of the Palestinian flag. And the area probably had been declared a closed military zone—off limits to outsiders.

The large room at the bottom of the house was filled with men in traditional white and black *kuffiyah* headdresses seated on chairs lining the four walls. The father and uncle of the boy sat under a large Palestinian flag, with photographs next to it of the dead youth and of Abu Jihad, the assassinated Palestinian leader.[3] A cassette player in the corner broadcast music, and in the middle of the room a small table was set up as a shrine. Red, green, black and white streamers decorated it, a plaque bearing a map of historic Palestine was propped on it, and draped over the edge was a large piece of butcher paper on which a poem to the dead youth had been inscribed. The walls were covered with nationalist slogans, and even as we sat there with the older male mourners, processions of youth arrived, proudly whipping out of their pockets even more replicas of the forbidden flag and tacking them up on the wall, along with more slogans and photographs of various nationalist leaders.

Everyone sat very still, saying nothing, until the father handed us each a photograph of his son. Then, in very measured and flat delivery, he told us how his son was slain. We leaned forward and listened intently as Mounira translated for us. Nasser Hawwash was the eighth victim of the December 16 Ras al-Ein massacre (the name of the neighborhood in Nablus), now referred to as "Black Friday." The young man had joined the funeral procession of a fourteen-year-old friend shot the previous night, taking up a forward position to help carry the flag-draped coffin. In what has become an oft-repeated scenario, soldiers fired on the funeral marchers, killing two of them and injuring fifteen. According to the dead youth's father, his son's initial head wound had not been serious. However, the ambulance that was carrying him to Maqased Hospital in Jerusalem was detained at a checkpoint for more than an hour. As a result of hemorrhaging, by the time he arrived at the hospital he was in critical condition. Placed on a respirator, he was eventually pronounced brain dead and expired on December 26.

3. Abu Jihad was one of the top leaders of the PLO and the person responsible for the West Bank and Gaza, including the dispensing of funds. He was assassinated by the Israeli Mossad (the equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency) in Tunis in April 1988.

The events of that day in Nablus were so intense that names blended into one another. It was not until after I returned home, when a Palestinian friend translated the inscription on the photograph I had been handed at the wake, that the name Nasser Hawwash registered. And it was another couple of weeks before I went through my notes and papers and found the clipping from the January 4 edition of the *Jerusalem Post,* "Tragedy of Two Hearts." It recounted how a Jewish family had tried to arrange for a heart transplant, offering money for the organ of the brain-dead Palestinian youth, Nasser Hawwash. What had particularly caught my attention were the words of one of the cardiologists in attendance at Hadassah Hospital: "It's very sensitive this time. First you shoot a man and you go and ask for his heart. It is too much—even for a physician." He went on to invoke the biblical expression, "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?"

The Gaza Strip: Where It All Began

The Gaza Strip is a narrow sliver of land fronting the Mediterranean on the east and bordering Egypt to the south. The 200,000 Palestinian refugees who fled Israel in 1948 overwhelmed the local population, which numbered only 80,000. After the 1948–1949 war, Egypt became the governing authority of the Gaza Strip, but it did not extend citizenship to the residents. Israel seized the Gaza Strip as well as the Sinai Peninsula during the 1967 war. The latter was returned to Egypt under the provisions of the 1978 Camp David Accords.

Today, the population of the Gaza Strip numbers more than 750,000 Palestinians, the majority of whom are crowded together in the eight refugee camps located there. The squalid, sprawling camps are among the most densely populated places on earth, exceeding even Hong Kong, with its high, vertical buildings. Even though they are not as numerous as in the West Bank, Israelis have built settlements here, too, mainly along the coast. In 1988, the settlers totaled approximately 2,500, yet the Israelis controlled more than half of the land in the Gaza Strip.

The once-thriving agricultural economy of Gaza has been stunted by both water and export restrictions that the Israelis have imposed. As a result, the residents of Gaza have become increasingly dependent on employment inside Israel. Before the Gulf War, as many as 70,000 streamed into Green Line Israel every day to seek work, mainly as low-paid laborers.

It was Gaza where the intifada *was sparked, on December 9, 1987, following an auto accident in Jabalya in which an Israeli driver struck and injured four Palestinians. Probably because of its proximity and historical relationship to Egypt (where the Muslim Brotherhood was founded), and because of its own tradition of*

Muslim orthodoxy, Gaza also became the birthplace of HAMAS, the Islamic resistance movement founded shortly after the beginning of the intifada.

Gaza City was like a war zone in December 1988. The natural stone surfaces of the buildings were barely detectable beneath the large, ominous black X's that the Israeli soldiers had painted over the Palestinian graffiti. Streets were blocked off, and it was almost impossible to drive on a straight path from one part of the city to another. Going on foot probably would have been easier, but it was not safe to walk in the center of town: soldiers were posted everywhere, and deadly encounters between them and the youth were still routine. While the tension in East Jerusalem sometimes abates, in the Gaza Strip, where the living conditions are the most abysmal, it only continues to build. Some of the worst punishment has been meted out there, and the *intifada* fatalities there have consistently been the highest.

Jabalya Refugee Camp, measuring only 1.5 square kilometers, is teeming with almost sixty-five thousand people. Some of the residents are those who originally fled from their homes in 1948. Others are the children of these refugees and their grandchildren and great-grandchildren: four generations of Palestinians who have lost their ancestral homes, olive orchards, and orange groves. At least two generations have been denied their birthright and know only the alternating muddy or dusty streets of Jabalya and the concrete-block houses built by UNRWA. It is no wonder that this is where the *intifada* began.

There is an air of danger here, emanating not so much from the Palestinians but from the Israeli soldiers. The usual tension that is felt by those who visit Jabalya was heightened for us when we were instructed not to tell anyone we were Jewish. After all, we had been traveling openly as Jewish-Americans in the West Bank, even distributing a statement signed by thousands of other Jews applauding the November 15, 1988, declaration of a Palestinian state.

Our apprehension increased when the car in which we had been riding pulled into a dusty clearing outside the camp and a group of young men came over to check us out. Both Mounira and Jamal, the former boutique shop owner who was serving as our guide in Gaza, were on edge as they got out of the car to talk with the youths. After an exchange in Arabic, tensions were reduced, and the *shabab* (literally, youth, but the term has come to symbolize the youthful activists of the *intifada*) gave an all-clear whistle. They had assessed our little band and decided we were safe. As the *shabab* relaxed their stance, the women came out to greet us. They were dressed in

the blue-and-rose-striped *thaubs* typical of the region, their heads covered with white, chiffon-like scarves worn in various styles. They exuded strength and determination as they surrounded us, all shouting at once. Their voices sounded angry—it is not hard to detect anger, regardless of the language barrier. But their faces registered friendliness. They wanted us Americans to do something about the tear gas that our country supplied to their Israeli rulers.

As we headed into the camp, scurrying along the raw sewage drains that ran down the narrow pathways, we were swarmed by children following us to our destination. Jamal tried shooing them away, fearful that their numbers would attract the attention and ire of the soldiers who spied on the camp residents twenty-four hours a day from their observation post. The children were themselves anxious about being spotted, and as they rushed alongside and behind us, they appeared to be hyperventilating from a combination of fear and excitement.

When we finally found the house Jamal had been looking for, the children dispersed. Ushered into a typical six-by-nine-foot block house, we took our places on the straight-backed kitchen chairs that lined the walls, and waited. A plump young woman in a long dress and wearing a scarf tied at the back of her neck entered, holding a baby. She was accompanied by a man of about the same age. Torn between the futility of once again repeating the story of what had befallen their little daughter, Fida al-Shrafi, and the hope that something good might come of their personal tragedy, the couple overcame their reluctance only at the urging of the other women of the household.

The mother sat clutching her eighteen-month-old daughter as if to shield her from any further harm. The child sat still, expressionless, her father at her side, gently prompting his wife whenever she flagged. The mother recounted how nine months earlier, carrying her infant in her arms, she was shopping in the open market during the brief lifting of a curfew. A volley of tear gas had been unleashed, and the next thing she knew, the baby was hit in the eye by a rubber bullet. Inexplicably, the soldier who had fired the bullet tried to remove it, an act that might very well have precluded the possibility of saving the eye.[1] For the rest of her life Fida al-Shrafi will wear the glass eye, which her mother took out to show us.

I found that the only way I could control myself during the telling of the story was to concentrate on a spot on the ceiling. It was too painful to look at the child, especially at her empty eye socket. All I could do was to sit

1. The mother's account was corroborated by a UN officer the next day.

there, my arms crossed in front of my chest, as if trying to hold myself together.

Stopping for gas as we continued touring the Gaza Strip, we saw a long line of people streaming up the dirt road from el-Birej Refugee Camp toward the gas station. Women were carrying jugs on their heads, and men were toting five-gallon plastic containers. Jamal went over to the water tap where they were lined up. Although his boutique business had gone bankrupt, Jamal was still better off than most Gazans, and he certainly had suffered less than those in the refugee camps. He returned to the car, shaking his head in utter disbelief, and reported to us that the camp had been under curfew for a full two weeks and without water for six days. The curfew had just been lifted, but the Israelis had still not turned on the water.[2]

We turned onto a dirt road, heading toward the sea. To our left we caught a glimpse of the large white stucco Israeli resort settlement overlooking the blue waters of the Mediterranean. Along the way, at a dusty intersection near the coastline, we came across a small cluster of men engaged in heated bargaining. Their small pickup trucks parked behind them were laden with oranges. We had not stopped for food before the noontime shop closures, so we jumped at the chance to buy a few oranges. Discovering we were Americans, the men refused a cash payment, insisting instead that our payment was to get the U.S. Congress to recognize Palestine.

Late in the afternoon, on our return to Gaza City, we went to the home of Jamal's uncle, the honorary mayor of Gaza. Faez Abu Rahme, trained as a lawyer, bemoaned the fact that he was unable to exercise his knowledge and skills in the military courts: "I can only act as a priest, not a lawyer, if I am not allowed to see my clients for thirty days." It is this Israeli mockery of the judicial process, he explained, that has led him and other lawyers to participate periodically in boycotts of the military court trials.

In explaining his own ideas for a peaceful settlement, Abu Rahme, one of the national leaders who has met with various U.S. secretaries of state, added a new twist to the PLO program we had heard other national figures enunciate: the idea of a demilitarized Palestinian state. Counseling patience and hopefulness, he pointed out that it took the United States almost thirty years to recognize China and more than ten years to acknowledge defeat in Vietnam. He was confident that the *intifada,* fueled by a

2. The next day, meeting with an UNRWA information officer, I learned that six months earlier, in June 1988, the water had been turned off for fifteen days, resulting in many cases of severe dehydration, especially among children.

generation that had no fear of the Israelis or their guns, would eventually create the conditions for Israeli withdrawal. Ever the perfect host, and eager to break the monotony of the austere social life that characterized the *intifada,* Abu Rahme invited us to lunch the next day.

It had been a hard day, and it was a relief to return to Marna House, the homey inn where Gazans come to meet with foreign visitors. The authoritative presence of the woman who manages the inn seems to keep the soldiers out.

The strong Islamist influence in Gaza is well known. Unlike the secular nationalists, the Islamists are not interested in meeting with outsiders, especially with Jews. But a meeting had been arranged for us with someone characterized as an Islamic figure, a member of the Muslim Brotherhood.[3] A massive, muscular man, who looked a bit like a wrestler, the Haj (a title indicating someone has made a pilgrimage to Mecca) sat stiffly at the head of the table in the dining room at Marna House, his arms crossed. Speaking in classical Arabic, he gave a history of the Muslim Brotherhood, the precursor of HAMAS, in Gaza. Unused to the classical form of the language, Mounira was having difficulty translating, and when she stumbled or made an error, the Haj, in perfect English, corrected her. Frustrated with the task and angered by his arrogance, she snapped at him: "You know English, tell them yourself!" Revealing his utter disdain for her, he responded, "No, it is your job."

There was nothing cordial about our visit with him, but we did learn about the movement, and especially about the shifting relationship between the Brotherhood and the Israelis and between the Brotherhood and the Palestinian national movement.

After the PLO was forcibly removed from Lebanon in 1982, the Brotherhood thought of themselves as the replacement for the PLO, according to the Haj, and they began to build political cells. As surprised by the outbreak of the *intifada* as anyone else, it took the Islamist leadership two to three months to decide whether they were going to support it. Despite the influence of HAMAS in Gaza, he believed that only 4 to 5 percent of the activists of the *intifada* were affiliated with them.[4] A principal of an UNRWA school, the Haj broke with the Brotherhood in 1982 because

3. While the West uses the term Islamic fundamentalist, the preferred term is Islamist, i.e., someone who follows Islamic precepts. The interpretations of these vary, from conservative to what might be called reconstructionist.

4. At the time, others placed the figure at more like 10%. However, recent studies suggest that increased since the Gulf War.

he had come to believe that religion should be separated from politics. That belief might have accounted for his willingness to meet with us.

After a large, well-prepared dinner, the others adjourned to the cozy sitting room and settled in front of the fireplace to watch a series of European video documentaries on the *intifada.* I had taken in enough. The curfew imposed nightly in Gaza City from 8:00 P.M. to 3:00 A.M. (lifted in time for the laborers from Gaza to leave for work inside Green Line Israel) was about to be imposed, so we could not go out for a walk. Instead, I retreated to our room and, fully clothed, crawled under several layers of blankets. I awoke ten hours later at 6:45 A.M.

It was warmer outside than the previous day, and we took our coffee out to the patio of Marna House to meet with our guest, Dr. Haidar Abdul Shafi. A tremendously dignified tall man, with a slight stoop and bushy gray eyebrows, Dr. Shafi's calm, measured tones did not mask the frustration he felt in trying to fulfill his role as the head of the Red Crescent Society in the Gaza Strip. Despite the availability of funds he had not managed to get Israeli approval to proceed either with the building of a hospital or with the equipping of nine ambulances. They sat idle and unusable.

The Gaza-born physician, who had a complete command of English, displayed not even a hint of bitterness as he recounted how he had been rudely awakened in the summer of 1970 and carted off by the Israeli soldiers. Without filing any charges against him, the authorities had driven him to the Lebanese border the next morning, along with five other Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. Told to keep walking and not look back, Abdul Shafi described the experience as "one of the most difficult moments in my life, not knowing in my heart if I would ever see my country and my home again." Three months later, following Black September,[5] Abdul Shafi had become one of the very few Palestinians deported at that time who were allowed to return. He was, he told us, the beneficiary of Israel's euphoria over the massacres of Palestinians in Jordan and the routing of the PLO. The doctor is a passionate and eloquent advocate of the Palestinian cause, and we were not at all surprised when he later became the head of the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace talks. In that capacity he earned the respect even of the Israeli public with his opening speech at the Madrid conference in October 1991.

5. In September 1970 civil war broke out between the Palestinian guerrilla forces in Jordan and the Jordanian government. Three thousand Palestinians were killed, and all PLO institutions in Jordan were closed down. The PLO leaders fled to Lebanon, where they set up their new headquarters. These events have become known as Black September.

We stopped to talk with a group of ten-year-olds we encountered as we walked through a relatively affluent, pleasant neighborhood from Marna House to the center run by the Near East Council of Churches. In contrast to the almost patrician and sedate physician, they were boisterous and audacious. They were preparing for the anniversary commemorating the founding of Fateh (the PLO faction organized and headed by Yasir Arafat) and were posting pictures of the assassinated PLO leader Abu Jihad and of Abu Ammar (Arafat). They knew that the posters would be taken down by the soldiers almost as fast as they posted them, but they had enough, they joked, to keep replacing them. Borrowing the *kuffiyah* that Ron was wearing, one of the youngsters wrapped it around his head and face and posed under the picture of Arafat, flashing the "V" sign.

When Faez Abu Rahme had extended his lunch invitation to us the previous afternoon, we had no idea we were to be hosted at the cavernous dining room of "The Love Boat." Overlooking the Mediterranean, the restaurant—which Abu Rahme had arranged to open for a private party—was a relic of another era, of a Gaza social scene that had been eclipsed by the *intifada.* The painted murals on the wall behind the band stand were a garish homage to the 1970s American situation comedy.

Two Italian journalists joined us for the banquet that our host had arranged, replete with wine. While they interviewed him, the rest of us walked down to the beach and spoke with the men who were working on their boats. "It is practically useless," they told us, as they scraped their boats, going through the motions of the work that all fishermen do. "We can't get permits to fish, and when we do, we are so restricted in how far out to sea that we can go, that we can barely make enough to cover our expenses."

After returning to thank our host, the five of us set out to walk back to Marna House, where we had arranged to meet the Italian journalists for the return trip to Jerusalem. Losing our bearings, we wandered inadvertently into Shati (Beach) Refugee Camp. A man rushed out of his house and warned us, "Someone was shot here less than one hour ago. It's not safe for you to be here. People might mistake you for Israelis." Palestinians usually were careful to distinguish between Jews and Israelis, Zionists and non-Zionists, but we knew that in the heat of the moment these rational distinctions could evaporate. The children had already been testing us, trying to check out our identity by shouting *shalom* at us. Perhaps Jamal was right, after all, when he advised us that in Gaza it might be better not to identify ourselves as Jews.

Jerusalem: Pages from a Notebook, I

New Year's Eve signaled the official end of our week-long tour and the beginning of a different journey for me. We had talked of having a little New Year's Eve party at Jawdat's apartment outside Bethlehem, but our hearts were not really in it. Besides, there were rumors of a curfew. The next morning Eileen left for Tel Aviv, and Marvin, Ron, and I decided that we would celebrate the New Year together before Ron also left. We were delighted to learn of a restaurant down the block that had been given special dispensation to stay open.

Hidden from the street, in a subterranean location, it was difficult to find "The Philadelphia." Stooping to get under a partially lowered shutter, we entered a passageway, finally made out the dimly lit sign, and groped our way down a flight of steps. As difficult as it was for us to find, the restaurant's special status was not a very well kept secret. The small room, with its Middle Eastern decor and mixture of cushions at low tables and high-backed chairs at Western set tables, was packed. The family atmosphere and the language overheard suggested that the Italian consular community was celebrating New Year's Day here. The atmosphere and food were almost luxurious in contrast to the austere conditions of daily life under the *intifada.* It was our first real respite, our first chance to unwind, and as the three of us sank down onto the plump cushions, we tried our best to ignore the slight pangs of guilt that we felt.

For the next week Marvin and I went our own ways; I spent most of my days meeting with leaders of the Palestinian women's movement. Our pace was more leisurely, and we spent more time at the hotel. The National

Palace is a large but simple, old-fashioned hotel. Located just a few blocks from the Old City, it is a homey place, very different from the American Colony, a stylish hotel where most of the foreign press corps stay and eat and drink. The cave-like bar and more elegant restaurants at the American Colony feel removed from the harsh reality of Israeli occupation, largely untouched by the *intifada.*

The National Palace, on the other hand, is in the thick of things: press conferences are held there, Palestinian national figures often use it as the site for meeting with heads of states, and delegations of ordinary citizens from the United States and Europe usually stay there and meet with locals. The immense lounge off the lobby, with its velvet covered sofas and chairs arranged in at least ten different seating clusters, was usually crowded with people engaged in intense conversations. A mixture of foreigners speaking a variety of languages dominated the venue in the evening hours. At midday, though, it was the middle-aged local businessmen from the old established families who took over, exchanging gossip as they drank strong, cardamom-flavored Arabic coffee and sipped water.

The hotel had been crowded with a combination of delegations, most of them larger than ours, and with Christian pilgrims. But as the end of Christmas vacation approached, it emptied, and the staff became less harried. When he was on duty in the evenings, I spent time talking with Mohammed, the former painter who had often served as our driver. He was always eager to hear my reactions to the various women I was interviewing, and he even arranged some meetings for me with one committee leader and with the head of a trade union association.

Samir, who usually wore a smile, seemed to be on hand during the late afternoon and early evening and to have some position of authority at the hotel. I learned that he was a chemist by profession and had completed his graduate work in southern California. Even though Bir Zeit University had been closed down by the Israelis since the beginning of the *intifada,* he was allowed to keep his laboratory there open. It was one of the places in the West Bank where water and pharmaceuticals could be tested. Samir became excited when he learned that I taught at California State University, Long Beach. "Then you must know my cousin, Rifaat!" Only then did I realize that the hotel my friend's family ran was the very place where we had been staying. Over the years, during my return visits, it became my home away from home. And the staff and the members of Rifaat's family looked out for me.

In January 1989 the hotel was the base from which I set out daily to the outskirts of Jerusalem or to Ramallah to interview the women's movement leaders. It felt good to be finding my own way after a week of being

programmed, and I gradually learned to pick out landmarks. But at first I did not know how to use the *servis,* the jitneys that were the major mode of transportation between Jerusalem and Ramallah. It took several minutes before it dawned on me that the seven-passenger Mercedes cars that periodically honked as they passed me on Saladin Street were actually signaling, inquiring whether they should stop for me. Once I succeeded finally in flagging one down, I got in and simply held out a handful of shekels. Another passenger pointed to a one-shekel coin, the right amount for the fare.

From Charity to Emancipation

During the entire first week of my visit I had been inundated with accounts and images of the horrors of Israeli occupation, on the one hand, and regaled with stories of Palestinian heroism, on the other. We had met with many national figures, but with only two exceptions the women were either in the background in the homes we visited or were the mothers of youthful *intifada* casualties.

One of the exceptions, Sameeha Khalil, is probably the best known among the older generation of women nationalist leaders. A woman in her late sixties, her graying hair pulled back in a tight bun, Umm Khalil, as she prefers to be called,[1] is the reigning matriarch of Inash al-Usra (Society for the Preservation of the Family), an institution she founded in 1965. Umm Khalil's story of fleeing to Gaza in 1948 mirrors that of other refugees. But in contrast to most, who were farmers, she had assets that she was able to transport. The sale of her jewelry is what got the family through their first few difficult years of exile—and, she hastened to add, "prevented them from being reduced to begging from UNRWA." Umm Khalil told us that over the years she had become convinced that "nobody will help you reach your freedom but yourself." After her husband secured a job in el-Bireh (the twin city of Ramallah), she started her project in a garage with one employee and one second-hand sewing machine. Umm Khalil built Inash al-Usra into a sprawling social-service and educational institution with the

1. Umm Khalil means, literally, mother of Khalil. Traditionally, men and women were referred to as the mother (Umm) or father (Abu) of their eldest son.

assistance of other women of her class and generation who were also becoming involved in charitable projects.

Just six months before we visited her, the Israelis had dealt a serious blow to her work. The sewing factory, where village women were trained, and the biscuit factory, which generated income for Inash, had both been ordered closed for a period of two years. The contents of the folkloric museum and library were confiscated, and the doors to these operations had all been welded shut.[2] These punitive measures were necessary, the Israelis claimed, citing Umm Khalil as a threat to the security of the state of Israel. The basis for these allegations, spelled out in a sixty-five-page document, were the many speeches she had made and the articles she had written. It was only the latest in a string of punishments that had been meted out to her over the years, including six jailings and a two-year town arrest.

Sameeha Khalil was outraged but undaunted. Gesticulating in broad sweeping motions, she proclaimed: "If they close the door, we will come through the window. If they close the window, we will make a hole in the wall." Crammed together in the space that remained, Umm Khalil and her staff still managed to run the three-hundred-bed orphanage and the child-care center and continued to dispense material aid to needy families. As angry as she was about what had happened to the Palestinian people and to herself personally, she tried to counter our rage by telling us a story about an Israeli soldier who had stood with tears streaming down his face as he beat a Palestinian child.[3] I was amazed that this woman who had been deemed a "threat to the security of the state of Israel" was trying to prove to *us* the humanity of at least some Israelis.

Umm Khalil and the women from the Arab Union of Charitable Societies formed the backbone of the campaign of *sumud* (steadfastness), which had marked the nationalist movement in the period preceding the *intifada.* These older, respectable women from middle class families provided training, counseling, and education to less privileged women in towns and villages. They are very much like the early twentieth-century women reformers in the United States: women who were responsible for developing social agencies to benefit other women, but who often held very conservative ideas about women's place in society. Unabashedly, Umm Khalil proclaimed that a woman's greatest contribution to the nationalist

2. When the authorities finally allowed them to reopen in June 1990, the valuable historical folklore documentation was still not returned.

3. Yesh Gvul (there is a limit), the organization of resisters who refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories, refers to these soldiers facetiously as the "shoot and cry" people.

movement was to produce ten children. In spite of their own ideas, Umm Khalil and her generation of women activists provided the training ground for many of the leaders of the contemporary women's movement.[4]

When our group had met with Umm Khalil at Inash al-Usra during our tour, she had recited for us a bit of her own history, and from her remarks I gleaned a clear sense of her ideas about women. I listened, with no distinct agenda of my own when I met with her and other national figures. With the women's committee leaders, it was different. I conducted formal interviews; I wanted to learn their individual biographies as well as the history and programs of each group. Perhaps it was simply too presumptuous of me to assume that I could conduct the kind of life-history interview to which I was accustomed. My goal in interviewing them was to get as full a picture as I could of the Palestinian women's movement, including insights into the way individual consciousness had shaped the movement. Their goal was to accommodate my interest in the women's movement and also to use me as another medium for their message. But I did not want to be merely a passive receptor, to hear only formulaic descriptions. Oddly, I had been tolerant of these from all the men with whom we met. Maybe that was because I was still learning about the nationalist struggle. I had a lot to learn about the Palestinian women's movement, too, but from the beginning I felt that I was on more solid ground. Ultimately, I did gain a broader perspective of the movement and could almost chart the continuum from the older charitable societies to the most avowedly feminist groups.

Even though the Women's Social Work Committee was founded by a new generation of women in 1984, their agenda—and even their name—follows closely in the footsteps of the earlier charitable organizations. With no apologies, its aim is simply nationalistic, and its emphasis is on women's auxiliary roles: going to visit the sick and wounded, knitting sweaters for prisoners, and so forth. Like both the older women's organizations and the other three contemporary women's committees, this group operates child-care centers and runs sewing projects.

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4. The organized contemporary movement is comprised of four major women's committees, each aligned with one of the five major groups of the PLO (prior to the split in the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, it was four). The women's committees are the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC), the Union of Working Women's Committees (UWWC), two different Women's Action Committees (WAC), and the Women's Social Work Committee. There are also individual feminists who are not aligned with any of the committees.

From everything I had read and from what the two women I interviewed told me, it sounded as if the only goal of the Women's Social Work Committee was to recruit women into the nationalist movement. In spite of this, the librarian who served as one of the five members of the executive committee sent a mixed message when she responded to my question about feminism:

> No, no, we are not feminist. We are for women, and we are for helping them to be independent—independent from men—but, no, we are not a feminist group.

The goal of making women independent certainly falls within almost any interpretation of feminist, and I suspected that her adamancy was more a reaction to the label than to the concept. Nevertheless, the contentious quality of this exchange made me reluctant to explore the question further.

The exchange did not surprise me. I understood not only the very real differences but also the perception of differences between the feminist agenda of many middle class Western women and the ideas about women's liberation among Palestinians. For instance, it was hard for me not to impute significance to the fact that the children of Maha Nassar, a leader of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, were playing with Barbie dolls in the corner of her living room while I interviewed her. The common American feminist concern about nonsexist toys, I am sure, would have seemed rather silly to Maha and her colleague who joined us. It was a perfect example of why they disparaged what they defined as Western feminist ideology, that is, advocacy of the idea that women should not only be equal to men, but identical. More than that, to their mind feminism meant separation from men. "But," I stammered, "that is a certain kind of feminism. Not all of us believe that." This was not a new argument for me, and it echoes the disagreements that still linger between different groups of women in the United States.

I tried not to be defensive as I explained the range of ideas that feminists even in the United States embrace. The discussion made me much more appreciative of the difficulties faced by Palestinian women who were trying to balance national and gender interests. Maha and a colleague who joined us seemed to subscribe to the same principle that has marked many other anticolonial and revolutionary movements, arguing that "liberation will eliminate all sorts of oppression, wherever it arises: national oppression, class oppression or gender oppression." Knowing the history of these movements and what has happened in one country after another, I was more skeptical. I became less and less certain about their group's stand as I listened to the two women, especially when their orchestrated

responses broke down and they interrupted each other or finished each other's thoughts. For instance, when her colleague talked about "enhancing women's social and economic situation in order to be effective in the liberation of the society and of the nation," Maha jumped in and added "and of the women themselves." The dynamic between them might have betrayed their personal differences, but I suspect that it was more a reflection of the ambivalent position of their organization at the time. Maha explained that they believed that both the national and women's causes had to progress together. However, she was quick to add:

> That doesn't mean that they have to be at the same level all the time. At certain periods of time most of your activities should be directed in one direction . . . because the situation requires it—like what is happening now.

Maha's group seemed to walk a fine line between integrating nationalist and feminist aspirations and giving priority to the former. The activities of her committee are undoubtedly a way to help recruit women to the nationalist cause, but Maha, as well as the leaders of the other progressive women's committees, made it clear that their economic workshops and child-care centers were intended "to help emancipate women." Whether or not these programs contribute to this ambitious goal, men often viewed them as a clear threat. For instance, Zahira Kamal, who founded the very first of the women's committees in 1978, related how the men in one of the villages objected to a family planning program her group had established there. Accusing the committee of "teaching the women to disobey," the men demanded that all the committee's programs, including the kindergarten, be shut down. Zahira recounted how she confronted them personally, telling them:

> It is the women's decision. We are here to hear from the women. If they don't want us to continue, it's okay. But if there is only one woman who wants it, we will stay here. It's not your decision.

Not only did the program remain, but Zahira told me proudly that today it is one of their major successes.

I met with Zahira, a striking woman in her mid-forties with a distinct raspy voice, at the office of the Women's Action Committee, just outside Jerusalem. Despite the bone-chilling temperature inside the sparse center, women were constantly coming and going. They asked questions, picked up information, and stopped by simply to visit. It was reminiscent of the Women's Center that I had helped to staff in Los Angeles in the early 1970s. Zahira's story was rooted in Palestinian culture, but it, too, had a familiar ring.

When she was sixteen, Zahira's father became ill and told her that she would not be able to go to the university, after all, that the money had to be saved for her brother's education. In response Zahira went on a hunger strike. But, as she told me with a mischievous grin, "I did manage to sneak juices." After two weeks her father relented, and when he recovered, he personally took her to Egypt to enroll in the university. There, she was greatly influenced by the student movement.

When Zahira returned to Jerusalem in 1968, she joined the study groups that were then so popular and started raising "the woman question." Initially, she worked within the framework of the women's charitable organizations—and still serves on the board of Inash al-Usra. "But," she explained, "I became impatient, eager to address women's issues more directly." Finally, in 1978, with other women of her generation, she formed the committee from which all the others eventually sprung. Their goal was "to raise consciousness about women's issues."

Zahira Kamal, a nationalist leader as well as a feminist leader, was selected to be part of the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid conference, but she has not been as visible in the West as Hanan Ashrawi, the official spokesperson. For many years prior to going to Madrid, Zahira had not even been allowed to leave Palestine, and from 1980 to 1986 she had been under town, and even house, arrest. Initially, the only way she could fulfill her duties as a science teacher was through correspondence with her students. She was finally given permission to resume teaching, but only after she first reported every morning to the police station. When classes were dismissed, she had to report in again and then had to scurry around in the two hours left before dusk to attend to all her business. The dawn-to-dusk house arrest did little to slow her down, however, and her home became a hub of activity. The women's committee that she headed for so many years grew steadily, and she boasted that after the beginning of the *intifada,* in late 1987, it grew to more than ten thousand members.

All the women's committees flourished in the early days of the *intifada,* and while charitable work might have been appropriate during the period of *sumud,* organizing for women's emancipation was more in line with the populist spirit that infused the Palestinian uprising. Women's broad participation in the *intifada* also had unintended consequences, as captured so tellingly by Rana Nashashibi, the leader of another one of the women's committees:

> When you learn to confront the soldiers, then you can also learn to confront the father, then you can learn to confront the husband, and you can learn to confront any authority that is trying to oppress you.

The *intifada* had transformed the women's committees, no less than it had the traditional women on the street who filled and hauled buckets of stones for the youths to throw. There was another side to the women's movement, too, as represented by the independent feminists, many of whom were academicians.[5] In talking with some of these women, I was often struck by the uncanny similarities in the paths we had followed as feminists. Suha Hindiyeh, for instance, a British-educated sociologist, dreamed of opening an independent women's research center. She had been moved to start doing research on women as a result of her feminism, just as I had done some sixteen years earlier. We launched into a discussion that cold winter day in 1990 that we continued over the next several years.

Rita Giacaman, too, was part of the generation of young scholars returning to Palestine in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I had met Rita earlier, when she stole several hours from her busy schedule to meet with our delegation at her apartment on the outskirts of Ramallah. Mirroring its occupant, the apartment was colorful and slightly unconventional, decorated in a style that combined eastern and western motifs.

An American citizen, Rita had chosen to emigrate to her homeland, where she became immersed in helping to build the health movement. Along with the student movement and the nascent women's movement, it became a moving force for social change, paving the way for the *intifada*. A doctorate in pharmacology and advanced studies in sociology equipped Rita to become a leading advocate of primary health care, especially for women and children, and to establish a community health program at Bir Zeit University.

Incredibly intense and articulate, with a rapid-fire speech delivery, Rita loved to talk about her own work. But she was also interested in mine and was particularly eager to hear about my interviews. Conversing over lunch in her kitchen, I began to form some clearer ideas about the women's movement, but I was also left with many questions. Our visit was particularly enjoyable because it was also one of the very few occasions during my entire trip that I felt I was more than a cipher, a foreign visitor to whom an oft-repeated story was being told. It helped, of course, that Rita had lived in the United States for a good part of her adult life and that she was as comfortable in English as in Arabic. We spoke the same language, literally and figuratively.

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5. Like the majority of Palestinians, "independents" support the PLO, but they are not aligned with any particular faction within the PLO. For women, it also means that they are not members of any of the women's committees.

Rita Giacaman is part of the new generation of Palestinian women activists. Along with the others whom I interviewed, she is helping to define a women's agenda as part of the fight for Palestinian self-determination. Sameeha Khalil and her cohorts who founded the charitable societies helped to sustain their generation and they kept alive the spirit that empowered the next. I admired the women of both these generations. But in the younger one I found more kindred souls.

Songs of Children

East Jerusalem seemed as tense toward the end of our trip as at the beginning. Soldiers were visible atop the parapets of the Old City most of the time, parked on the steps of the post office on Saladin Street, and constantly patrolled the area around the Old City. The day before Epiphany[1] their presence seemed suspiciously large. Marvin and I were ending our stay, and we still had done virtually no gift shopping. We decided to take advantage of the call by the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) for all shops to remain open until 5:00 P.M. in consideration of the Christian holiday during which gifts are exchanged.

The streets were filled with people: young people enjoying the temporary return to normalcy, families shopping, and storekeepers beckoning the crowds. As we learned later, the Old City was even more crowded. The large number of police vans on Saladin seemed unwarranted, and we peered down several sidestreets and alleyways but could see no evidence of youths gathering. Then we noticed a glistening object in the hand of one of the policemen and also grasped that another one was in walkie-talkie communication with some unseen contact. Suddenly the blue-uniformed police began to unleash a volley of tear gas canisters.

1. Epiphany, also referred to as Twelfth Day or Little Christmas, is a Christian feast celebrated on January 6 to mark the baptism of Jesus and the visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem.

People began to scream and ran back down the street or into the shops. Already overcome by the initial release of tear gas, we stood there, confused and disbelieving. A shopkeeper who came out to assess the situation on the street rescued us, pushing us into his simple tea shop as he partially pulled down the heavy metal shutter behind him.

We took refuge in the kitchen in the back of the shop with a small group of Palestinian men. From there we could hear the shouts outside, which were translated loosely for us: "All shops on the left, pull down your shutters. All shops on the right, pull down your shutters." And tear gas canisters continued to be lobbed down the street until all the shops were fully shuttered.

I did not even try to make sense of what had just happened and sat huddled there in the *kuffiyah* I was wearing that day to protect me from the cold wind, marveling to myself: "I am fleeing from Jews—Israelis—and being protected by Arabs—Palestinians." Everything was turned upside down. In the United States, in the face of anti-Semitism, I had sought solace from other Jews. Never would I have expected to seek protection *from* Jews and be given safe haven by non-Jews, particularly by those who allegedly hated me. Even as I write these words more than four years later, I break out in goose bumps recalling the teargassing that day.

After sniffing raw onions, the local treatment for tear gas inhalation, and downing tea for nearly an hour, we ventured out to the street and made our way back to the hotel. Later we learned that the entire area, including the walled Old City, had been systematically teargassed, and we understood what had transpired. The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising had ordered that the shops stay open until 5:00 P.M. However, the Israeli occupation authority was going to assert its power by forcing the shops to close at 3:30 P.M.

Having been thwarted by the attack on shoppers the previous afternoon, the next morning I headed for the Old City again, to spend my couple of free hours. I shopped, and I also listened to stories. The elderly Bedouin man whose little cubbyhole was filled with goods was delighted by my interest in the old textiles. He offered me coffee and a necklace made of seeds smelling faintly of cloves and patiently explained to me the origins of different items and their traditional uses. When our conversation turned to the events of the previous afternoon, he told me that his son was at the bus station just outside the Old City when the tear gas attack was launched. He suffered from an allergic reaction and lost consciousness. Lamenting the hardships of life under occupation, the old Bedouin sighed with resignation. He was ready to call it quits.

The teargassing was still fresh in my mind as I made my way to West Jerusalem to join the vigil of Israeli Women in Black.[2] When I arrived at Paris Square, a small triangular grassy island where three major arteries intersect, a group of more than fifty women were all in place, dressed in black, holding signs that read "*dai l'kibbush*" (End the Occupation) in Hebrew and English. As I took my place in the circle, I was chastised by one of the monitors for wearing navy blue, not black, but the women on either side of me welcomed me, and we started to chat.

The cars whizzing by honked—not in support, as happens in the United States, but in opposition—and men leaned out the windows yelling at us. The redhead next to me commented: "You're lucky that you don't understand Hebrew. It's terrible what they are saying." I was able to ignore the hostility and the obscenities, but she was visibly shaken. I was more angry at the two Meir Kahane supporters who walked back and forth with their "Black Widow Spiders" signs, yelling in distinct Brooklyn accents, "Whores," "Arab fuckers," "PLO lovers." But what upset me the most was the children banging on the window of their school bus, their faces twisted with hate and their voices filled with venom as they screamed at us.

As I told one after another of the courageous Women in Black about the teargassing the previous day in East Jerusalem, just a few kilometers away, I could see their eyes glaze over. As soon as they could, they shifted to a different position in the circle around the plaza. Their reaction disturbed me. I was looking for allies—an acknowledgement, I suppose, that my support of Palestinians did not make me traitor, a collaborator.

I wanted to tell them about some of my experiences during the previous week, especially about the children at Inash al-Usra who performed "The Refugee Song" for us. What would they have thought of my reaction? Perhaps it was unreasonable for me to expect these Israeli women—many of whose families were also refugees—to share the same feelings. Perhaps I should have been satisfied merely to stand next to them and support their defiance of their government.

After the demonstration I talked with Yvonne Deutsch, one of the leaders of the women's peace movement. When I told her how the women had turned away when I tried to tell them about the teargassing, she sympathized with them completely, commenting: "I'm not sure I could

2. Shortly after the *intifada* erupted, a group of Jewish Israeli women dressed in black started to demonstrate every Friday at a busy intersection in West Jerusalem. They stood silently holding their signs. From the original handful in Jerusalem, their numbers blossomed and the movement extended to cities throughout Israel and to the United States.

continue to live in this society, to fight against it, if I kept thinking about all the daily horrors of the occupation. It would be too much."

My meeting with Yvonne, a psychiatric social worker by profession, was the start of our friendship and of long political discussions we had on each of my return trips. Sensing the pent-up rage I felt, as we parted in January 1989, Yvonne counseled me, "Do not act out of anger." This was a theme to which we returned repeatedly over the next two years. Then, the images were still too fresh, my emotions too raw. The facts and figures about the conditions of Palestinians under occupation were no longer abstractions. The faces and voices of the people with whom I drank coffee and ate were now attached to these statistics. Furthermore, the Israeli occupiers were no longer an abstraction either. They were the members of the Border Patrol in Jerusalem who stopped the school girls, the trio who performed the bump and grind on the steps of the post office, the sharpshooter who killed Ibrahim Odeh as he stood at the window of his house in Deheisheh, the soldier who fired the rubber bullet that destroyed little Fida al-Shrafi's eye. They were all Jews, like me. It was hard to shake the feeling that I was carrying an enormous burden, a sense of shame similar to how I felt when I visited Hiroshima. It was a long time after I left Occupied Palestine before I understood that one of the reasons I was so angry was because Jews were behaving in a way that made me feel so ashamed.

JUNE 3, 1989, TO JUNE 26, 1989

Summer 1989

We returned from Palestine in mid-January to discover that our house had been broken into and that several things had been stolen. They were not expensive, by any means, but the silver belt we had brought back from the Himalayas and the carved horn from a Batak village in Sumatra had a special sentimental value for us. Yet, we were strangely indifferent. We attributed our initial reaction to being tired from the long flight, but the next morning, none of the anger we expected surfaced. We did not feel that we had "been violated," as I have often heard other people report. Burglary seemed like a minor inconvenience compared to having your house demolished.

I sorted through notes, slides, and tapes, and by the time the semester began two weeks later I had prepared a slide show and talk, which I first tried out on a small group of Jewish faculty at my own campus. Some were angered and jumped to Israel's defense. Others were stunned into virtual silence.

The things I had seen and heard and experienced initially were enough to talk about, but as I began to do more public speaking I became increasingly aware of how little I had really seen of the *intifada.* What initially had fascinated me so much was the widespread popular support, the essentially nonviolent methods being used to oppose Israeli occupation, and the imaginative ways that the Palestinians were building the institutions of a future state. Most of the people with whom I had spent any time during my first trip were recognized national leaders or other members of the educated urban middle class. And while their stories of

traveling cross-country to deliver food to villagers or of putting their cars in mothballs were impressive, they did not capture the populism and inventiveness of the *intifada.*

The only real glimmering I had of the more creative forms of resistance came from the story that Jad Isaacs, a Bethlehem University professor, told us about his detention at Ansar III, the prison camp in the Negev desert. Accused of being a "member of a popular committee" because he had distributed seedlings for *intifada* gardens, he had been placed under administrative detention[1] for four months. On the sly, he kept up his "criminal activity" in prison, propagating seedlings and feeding them with the compost he made with waste water. Until the soldiers discovered the secret garden, he supplied his tent-mates with mint for their tea and even with an occasional watermelon. Among the twenty-eight prisoners in the tent were many college students, and they had organized secret Hebrew, English, and Arabic classes. These were supplemented by whatever expertise other prisoners might offer. Using cardboard models, Isaacs, a biology professor, taught genetics. He was proud of how quickly he had moved his "students" from a rudimentary to an advanced level of understanding and told us that he was eager for the university to reopen so that he could try out his new teaching techniques.

Stories like this showed the less visible face of the uprising and captured its spirit. The *intifada* was a movement, to be sure, but it also had created a free space in society, a context in which social relations and institutions were in flux. To get a grasp of these changes, I wanted to observe the health committees at work, watch underground classes in session, visit the agricultural and production cooperatives. But I also wanted to meet ordinary Palestinians in villages and refugee camps and get a sense of the more mundane reality of their lives. Knowing more would make me more effective in my growing commitment to speak out publicly against Israeli occupation. There is no denying the element of adventure and intrigue that also attracted me. At some level, I suppose, it was an effort to participate vicariously in a historic movement for social and political change. At another, it was exhilarating to openly challenge the barrier that had kept me silent for so many years, to ignore the voices that had continually implored Jews not to criticize Israel.

Similarly, my growing interest in the Palestinian women's movement might have been fueled partially by memories of the early, exciting days of

1. Under Israeli military laws governing the Palestinians, people can be placed in administrative detention for up to one year without any formal charges being filed against them.

our own women's movement in the United States. There were important questions to be explored, however, especially because the *intifada* seemed to represent a new model: a nationalist movement in which a vital women's movement was being nurtured simultaneously. I wanted to learn whether the apparent differences I had noted in the ideas of different leaders of the women's committees meant anything at the grass-roots level, whether the lives of less formally educated women and their relationships with the men in their families were changing, whether the programs of the committees met the needs of the average women. Above all, I wondered what their vision was of their future. Interviewing grass-roots women's committee members was a perfect way to wed my scholarly and activist interests. I could use the interviews as a way to speak to American feminists about the Palestinian situation. At the same time, such interviews might serve as a useful mirror for the Palestinian women's movement itself.

I am not sure of the exact moment that I made the decision to return to Occupied Palestine, nor am I sure that I was not driven, at least in part, by the need to better understand my intense anger. By the time Rita Giacaman came to Los Angeles, just two months after I returned home, I was already contemplating a return visit. I had arranged for Rita to speak at our campus and had also called together several friends who were both activists and scholars of the Middle East. Over leisurely cups of coffee during her stay with me, Rita and I talked a lot—mainly about the Palestinian situation, but also about our respective research, politics, and personal lives. She encouraged me to return to Palestine during the summer and offered to try to find a place for me to stay. Michel, my Palestinian friend in Los Angeles, also encouraged me and promised to make some contacts for me.

As soon as the spring semester was over and I had turned in my students' grades, I boarded the plane. For the following three weeks I went to many of the same places I had gone the previous December, but I met different people and usually lingered longer. I also visited several villages for the first time and saw many of the projects in which I had been so keenly interested. I spent my time primarily with women.

Jerusalem: Pages from a Notebook, II

"It's good to arrive on Saturday," the Hebrew University professor riding in the *servis* from the airport to Jerusalem proclaimed. "None of the religious people are around then." He made no effort to hide his disgust with the Israeli flags hanging from every window in the neighborhood where we dropped off one of the other passengers. "I support the idea of protecting the state," he said, "but Israel should not be a major power in the Middle East." Noting my similar reaction to the flags, he hastened to assure me that they were left over from the independence day celebrations two weeks before. "They mean nothing," he told me, adding that at least 40 percent of the population were neither highly nationalistic nor religious.

The comments of the enigmatic professor of ancient history, coupled with the low-key atmosphere of the practically deserted airport, made for a trouble-free arrival. The National Palace Hotel had not received the message that I was coming, and everyone was surprised and pleased to see me when I walked in the door, dragging my bags made heavy by the books I had brought for the women's committees. After settling in I went downstairs for a beer and a chat with Samir, the California-educated chemist, who tended to the family-run hotel in the early evening hours. "Things aren't as tense in Jerusalem as they were when you here last winter," he told me, and filled in the details:

> The soldiers are not on the streets as much. But there are rumors that they're renting places all over East Jerusalem, using them to spy on us. And, lately, we've been awakened at 3:00 A.M. by the soldiers yelling into bullhorns as they drive by.

I don't understand Hebrew, but my wife tells me that what they are yelling is pretty obscene.

The next day was bright and sunny. I went for a morning walk along the walls of the Old City before meeting Kathy, the international human-rights worker at whose apartment Rita had arranged for me to stay. A three-day general strike had been called to commemorate the death the previous day of political prisoner Omar Qassem. All shops were closed, but the streets were beginning to fill with people. Samir was right: the atmosphere *did* seem less charged than I remembered from my last trip, and the military presence was minimal. Perhaps because of the warm weather, it felt more like a rest day than a general strike. Several middle-aged women were sitting on benches in the park outside the walls, chatting, an older couple was feeding scraps of bread to the cats that lived in the walls, and a couple of small children were playing in the grass under the watchful eyes of their father. I also noticed that a lot more young women were wearing white head scarves, the *hijab.*

Kathy Bergen, the large woman with long ash-blond hair and piercing blue eyes, was well known to everyone in East Jerusalem. A Canadian Mennonite who was nearing the end of her seven years of service in East Jerusalem, she was on assignment to the Palestine Human Rights Information Center. In addition to a very modest salary, she was given the use of a VW van and a partially subsidized apartment on Mt. Scopus, across from the Mennonite Central Committee Office. Her living space, on the second floor of an old stone building, was large but simple, and the stone exterior and marble tile floors kept it relatively cool in the summer. In the early evening hours, as dusk set in, the rooftop "garden patio" off her study was a pleasant place to rest. The extra bedroom, though just large enough for two twin beds, a night stand, and a small wardrobe, was comfortable. I began to wonder how well I would sleep, however, when Kathy gave me instructions on the use of an electric coil to repel mosquitoes.

The apartment became my home for the next several weeks, except when I stayed in Jabalya and in Issawiyeh, and after a while I became accustomed to the neighborhood sounds. But my first morning there I awakened with a start, jarred by the blare of the soldiers barking through their bullhorns at the girls on their way to the Islamic school just down the block.

It was the day of the funeral of Omar Qassem, who died in prison of liver cancer at the age of forty-eight. Like Nelson Mandela, he had been in prison for twenty-seven years. But unlike Mandela, who ultimately was

released by his jailors, the Israelis had refused to release Qassem, not even to let him die at home surrounded by his family.

Mounira, who had led our group the previous winter, had stayed in Palestine after we left. She called me at Kathy's when she learned I was back, and we arranged to meet outside the American Colony Hotel, from where we could walk the couple of blocks toward Wadi al-Joz, the starting point of the funeral procession.

The streets were lined with Palestinians coming to honor their fallen hero. They were joined by many of the international aid, education, and human-rights workers who live in East Jerusalem. There was a massive display of Israeli military might, too: large tanks, lines of helmeted soldiers with batons in hand and tear gas canisters fixed onto the ends of their rifles, Jerusalem mounted police, and scores of plainclothesmen, most of whom were wearing aqua-colored polo tops and standing by their white cars.

As the procession came up the gully (*wadi*) from the family house where the body had been lying in state, the *shabab* leading it raised the Palestinian flag. Immediately, the order came over the bullhorn to lower the flag or the crowd would be dispersed. The Palestinian man standing behind me on the sidelines translated for me in broken English, warning me to take care not to let the soldiers see my camera. For the next several blocks the procession gathered numbers as most of those on the sidelines joined it. The young men at the front began their cat-and-mouse game with the soldiers, raising and lowering the flag. As the long line of marchers swelled to over two thousand, the largest demonstration since the beginning of the *intifada,* their diversity and their defiance became more evident. Passing the headquarters of the Ministry of Justice, they tipped the open coffin, forcing the Israeli workers who were watching from the windows to look at the dead body. A few blocks later, rounding the corner at the East Jerusalem post office, I noticed several women yelling and pointing directly at the soldiers, attempting, perhaps, to shame them with their accusations.

Instead of following the crowd along the wall to the Golden Gate, Mounira and I took a shortcut and reached the entrance to the grounds of Haram-al-Sharif (what the Israelis refer to as the Temple of the Mount) before the mourners. By the time the procession came up the pathway and through the gate, the Palestinian flags were flying freely, held aloft by *shabab* sitting atop the shoulders of others, their faces wrapped in *kuffiyahs.*

After the procession had passed through the gate and into the spread-out grounds, Mounira led me through the narrow lanes of the Old City to a building overlooking the walled plaza of Haram-al-Sharif. Despite the height of our vantage point, the trees blocked our view of al-Aqsa Mosque,

and we abandoned our watch. Later we learned that the procession was teargassed as it made its way to the cemetery. Seven or eight mourners had been arrested.

That night, lounging on her rooftop patio, Kathy and I compared notes. She had watched the procession from the top of St. George's Cathedral and was quite shaken when she saw the body of Omar Qassem lying in the open coffin. We were joined later by her Arabic teacher from Beit Safafa, who told me how his village had been divided and his family split in 1948, half inside Israel, the other half on the West Bank. Each half would go to its side of the fence along the railroad track that cut the village in two, and they would yell messages to each other across the divide. The teacher choked up as he recalled how he was taken to the fence when he was seven years old to wave good-bye to his dying grandfather—brought to the other side in his wheelchair.

The general strike in observance of Omar Qassem's death lasted three days. Commercial enterprises remained closed, but legal, medical, and human-rights work continued. Ibrahim, the health committee representative who had visited our campus the previous fall, had offered to set up some appointments for me. It was early afternoon when we met at the National Palace, and the oversized lounge was empty. The doors onto the balcony were flung open, and the "businessmen's club" had moved out there. Ibrahim strode into the lobby, his calendar and notebook under his arm. Despite the heat, there was not a bead of perspiration on his brow. Constantly on the move, Ibrahim was friendly but very businesslike, and in short order we got down to a discussion of my plans. When our programs meshed, he planned to hook me up with a French couple who were involved with a medical support group in Lyons.

Until the general strike was over, it was impossible to do anything outside of Jerusalem. Ibrahim arranged for Jocelyne, Jean-Paul, and me to meet with Lea Tsemel, the controversial Jewish Israeli human-rights lawyer, at her third-floor walk-up office in one of the older buildings in East Jerusalem. Taking a moment of respite from conferences with clients, the petite, chain-smoking lawyer shook our hands vigorously. She apologized that she could not spend time with us that afternoon, waving to the crowded anteroom, "but I'll make it up to you," she promised, ordering us to meet her outside her office at 9:00 A.M. sharp the next day.

Lea Tsemel seems to have boundless energy, and she moves as rapidly as she speaks. A well-known figure among Palestinians, she was greeted warmly when she pulled up to a gas pump on our way to the military court in Ramallah. When we arrived at the massive compound twenty minutes

later, we were greeted by a scene of utter pandemonium. It was typical, Lea told us, as mobs of family members waiting outside the high chain-link fence pressed in, shouting at her, when she arrived. Angry and confused by the authorities' deliberate withholding of information, they looked to Lea as their only hope to learn something about the fate of their loved ones. But in their frustration and their desperate attempt to get information, they seemed to displace their anger onto her.

Demanding entrance for herself and arguing with the guard at the gate to let the three of us in, Lea commanded obedience, despite her diminutive size. The "court building" consisted of three small chambers where the proceedings took place. The judges, all wearing military uniforms, sat on a very high dais, the witness stand and translator's desk in front of them. The wooden benches facing the dais were packed with members of the families of the accused. The proceedings, which were in a mixture of Hebrew, Arabic, and sometimes even English, would have been comical, except that people's futures were at stake.

Half the time, the prisoners' files were not there. In many cases, files were there, but the prisoners were "lost," having been transferred so many times that the court no longer knew where they were being held. In one of the proceedings that we observed, the trial of six Islamists, the prosecutor reneged on a deal that had been arranged two months previously, and the trial was postponed another month.

In the third, smaller chamber, where only one judge sat, two young men were accused of throwing stones. The defense kept challenging the soldier who came to testify against them: "How do you know they are the ones who threw the stones?" Instead of throwing out the case when the soldier could offer no proof, the judge was on the verge of a postponement when a friend of the accused shouted out from the back of the courtroom: "Don't postpone, you'll never see him again." Even while acknowledging that prisoners are "misplaced" regularly, the military prosecutor argued against a postponement.

Trying to defend clients under these circumstances leads to constant frustration for an attorney, a frustration matching or even exceeding that of the family members who crowd the attorneys as they leave the fenced-in premises of the military court. Periodically, to protest this complete mockery of the judicial process, the Israeli and Palestinian defense attorneys go on strike. "But," Lea lamented, as she headed off to meet with one of her prisoner clients, "our remonstrations fall on deaf ears."

We left Lea and headed for the *servis* that would take us back to Jerusalem. It was already after noon, approaching the hour of confrontation. Until 12:30, when the daily commercial strike began, the *servis* station

was a bustling location.[1] Then, as the shutters were pulled down, the army jeep patrols were stepped up, and the *shabab* gathered on the side streets, ready to throw stones to chase the soldiers away. Stone-throwing was intended as a proclamation, just as the commercial strike was: keep out, leave, this is our city, our country.

It was quiet that day as the streets emptied. The only visible military presence was the lone soldier pacing on the rooftop across the street, his machine gun cradled in his arm. About the only sound to be heard was the *servis* drivers calling out, "*al-Quds? al-Quds?*" (the Arabic name for Jerusalem).

1. The closures, which were initiated at the beginning of the *intifada,* originally began at noon but were then moved to 12:30. By the latter part of the period discussed here, they began at 1:00 P.M.

The Building Blocks

In about 1978 Palestinian college students and young professionals returning from abroad began to perform public service work, and many work committees and organizations were formed. Some were independent, and others were clearly aligned with one of the four major parties (usually referred to as factions of the PLO) that hold sway in the West Bank and Gaza.

With the outbreak of the intifada *in 1987 the work of these committees became more important. For instance, to wean themselves from dependence on Israeli products, people were urged to grow as much fresh produce as they could in* intifada *gardens, women were encouraged to set up cooperatives to can and preserve fruits and vegetables, and villagers were supplied with the animals and the materials to begin chicken hatcheries and dairies.*

When the Israelis closed down primary and secondary schools for long stretches, popular education committees were established to assure that students continued at least some of their studies. Underground classes were held in mosques, churches, and private homes until these, too, were banned by the occupation authorities in 1988. While the primary and secondary schools were reopened periodically in the early days of the intifada, *the universities remained closed until the 1990–1991 academic year. Even without access to the university libraries or laboratories, professors continued to hold classes, sometimes in their own cramped apartments.*

The health committees also mobilized in response to the intifada. *They extended their services beyond basic primary health care and trained thousands of people to administer basic first aid to the injured and to those suffering from tear gas inhalation. To prepare for the necessity of blood transfusions in the face of serious injuries, the committees also blood-typed tens of thousands of people. Because*

UNRWA provides health services for the population of the refugee camps, the health committees concentrate most of their services in cities and towns. Most outlying areas are served by weekly mobile clinics, although a few scattered villages have a permanent clinic that is staffed at least several days a week.

Health Care in Town and Countryside

The Jerusalem headquarters of the Palestinian Medical Relief Committee was not far from Kathy's apartment on Mt. Scopus. Dr. Selwa Najjab, a bespectacled woman in her early forties, was hunched over her microscope when I arrived. I had met her the previous January when I interviewed her briefly about women's health care. She beamed with pride as she gave me a tour of the lab she had established, the first gynecological cytology lab in the West Bank. Now Palestinian women no longer have to go to Israeli medical facilities in Jerusalem for diagnostic Pap smears. Dr. Najjab lamented, however, that she was not in a position to offer routine preventive Paps. One of her proudest accomplishments is a program to train village health workers.

As I toured the clinic, a large AIDS prevention poster caught my attention. When I asked about it, Dr. Najjab told me that the handful of cases that had been detected so far had been primarily a result of contaminated blood transfusions received in the Gulf states. But, taking no chances, they had started an education campaign. I was very impressed that in a culture that strongly emphasized modesty they were willing to take up this challenge.

Contending with the modesty of Palestinian women was probably one of the greatest obstacles Dr. Najjab faced, I learned when I accompanied her the next day to the village of Biddu. The village, nestled in a dry, rocky range, felt remote though it was no more than a half-hour drive from Jerusalem. When we arrived at the small building where she held a weekly women's clinic, the waiting room was already crowded with patients, whom the doctor greeted with warmth and familiarity.

There was not a trace of arrogance or condescension as she attended these village women. They had given me permission to sit in on their consultations, and I watched as she chatted amicably with them about their problems, taking her time with each. A newly married young woman, her head scarf covering her hair in the style of the *hijab,* was examined and given birth-control pills; a young mother was prescribed medication; another woman was fit with an intrauterine device. Despite Dr. Najjab's casual manner, the women were terrified when it came to the vaginal examination. One, in her early thirties, screamed when she was examined.

The doctor told me that this was common, something she attributed to the shame associated with touching the genitals. To protect herself from blame, should a woman have a miscarriage, Dr. Najjab explained that she never performed a vaginal examination after the third month of pregnancy unless it was absolutely necessary.

During a brief lull between patients, I asked the doctor about the intrauterine device. In the United States, women's health groups had campaigned against it because of the high rate of infection. The doctor explained that, generally, the danger of pelvic inflammatory disease in women increases when either the man or the woman has multiple sexual partners, but that in this essentially monogamous society they rarely saw it. I love repeating this exchange when I speak to women's groups in the United States. Not only does it highlight the fallacy of universalizing Western feminist concerns, but it also challenges the stereotype of Arab men, who are more likely to be thought of as polygamous keepers of harems than as monogamous partners.

Though spotlessly maintained, the room housing the Nablus dental clinic run by the Popular Committee for Health Services[1] was damp, and its plaster walls were peeling. A dental chair dominated the room, which was also equipped with an autoclave, a desk, and a table where several sets of false teeth were laid out. The dilapidated state of the old stone building mirrored the conditions in this, the poorest part of Nablus—the Casbah.

The atmosphere in the neighborhood was charged. I could not shake my own disquiet at the news that two collaborators had been hanged from a lamppost outside the police station earlier that morning. Images of French women with shaved heads came to mind, women who were accused of consorting with the enemy during the Nazi occupation of France. On my previous visit to Nablus one of the patients at the hospital there had described how a collaborator had chopped down his olive trees and shot him and his family when they tried to stop him. What had these two men done, I wondered. Had they served as point men for an Israeli assassination squad? Doing the work of the enemy is certainly a heinous crime, but the summary justice that had been meted out disturbed me. Noting how upset Jocelyne, Jean-Paul, and I became at the news of the hanging, Ibrahim, who was accompanying us to Nablus, sought to reassure us that such a drastic measure usually was taken only after a long process. First there were simple warnings, he explained. If these were not heeded and the person continued to do the bidding of the occupiers, then he might be beaten. Only

1. The name was later change to Health Action Committee.

when all else failed, and after a "trial," would the collaborator be killed.

Fearing that the area would become a "closed military zone," Ibrahim had rushed us through the Casbah to the clinic destination where we would start our day-long tour of health facilities. Once there, Dr. Masri took over. He explained that since the medical clinic had been raided several months before—under the pretext of not having the proper permits[2]—he was forced to administer medical care out of the two-room dental offices. The medical team of Dr. Masri, the dentist, a dental technician, and one assistant would see fifty patients in the course of their morning and afternoon shifts.

The doctor took over as our guide after he completed his morning consultations with patients. Before we headed out to the countryside, we stopped to pick up his sister, who usually accompanied him when he went to the rural clinics. That way, if he was detained, or worse, she would be able to return home and notify the family. In contrast to the highly Westernized doctor, his sister was clad in full *sharia* dress[3]—but with a twist: black scarf; long-sleeved, ankle-length, black-and-white print dress; and black mesh stockings and high-heeled black patent-leather pumps. Her attire, similar to the less fashionable version worn by the women's committee members from Ein Beit Alma Refugee Camp reminded me that Nablus was still a socially conservative area.

It was a pleasant relief to get away from the tension that had loomed in Nablus and to drive through the hills to the Beddan Valley. We passed no roadblocks, and it was only after we pulled up to a roadside building in the village that a jeep came to a halt and the soldiers stopped to watch our movements. Ignoring them, Dr. Hussein, the Rumanian-educated physician who ran the local clinic, bounded up the slope to greet us. He led us back down the steep hill to a basement room at the back of a building, the new village clinic, which had been opened only four days earlier. The villagers had helped to fund the clinic, each family making at least a symbolic contribution of ten Jordanian dinars (approximately twenty dollars).

The sunny room was furnished simply, with an examining table, a desk, several straight-backed chairs, and a steel cabinet with medicines and supplies. There were already several patients waiting. Dr. Hussein, assisted

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2. Almost all of the medical committees were forced to run quasi-underground operations, since permits are very costly and difficult to obtain.

3. *Sharia* refers to Quranic prescription. In reality, the Quran merely prescribes modest dress, with no specific instructions. Full *sharia* dress usually means long sleeves and a long dress or skirt, in addition to the *hijab.*

by his very pregnant wife, gently examined a baby, carefully explained medication to an older couple, and bandaged the forehead of a young boy.

Leaving his wife to attend to any other patients who might straggle in, Dr. Hussein drove toward the Jordan Valley to show us the newly established clinic in Jiftliq. As we pulled into the barren setting of the village, a young man of African descent responded to the honking of the horn.[4] Nudging aside the donkey tethered outside, he unlocked the door of the small, stone, thatch-roofed building.

The room was barely large enough to hold the four us and insufferably hot from the baking sun. We merely glanced in and then retreated to the shade of the thatch overhang. Lacking electricity and running water, the clinic operation was a tribute to the blending of modern science and traditional technology. Medications were kept cooled by the evaporation from the wet clay vessel in which they were stored. The young local who assisted the doctor on the days the small clinic was open helped the villagers overcome their suspicion of outsiders and involved them in the new civil society that people like the doctor were helping to create.

The unassuming doctor seemed to have had little trouble gaining the villagers' trust. We made our way gingerly through the rubble of a building the Israelis had demolished and headed up the hill to a house where several villagers were waiting. Though he was shown enormous deference and respect, the doctor fit in easily with these people, chatting amiably and joining in their laughter.

Dr. Hussein's friendly exchange with the villagers—and later with the *imam* (Muslim priest) in Beddan to whose house we returned for lunch—impressed me. Recalling the earlier amicable tone of Dr. Najjab's interactions with her patients, I began to appreciate that these relationships were not just examples of individual personality quirks. Rather they reflected the unity of purpose between villager and urbanite, peasant and professional, religious figure and secularist.

Economic Development: Starting Small

The three young women who stood waiting outside an old traditional house on the outskirts of Saer all wore sweatshirts emblazoned (in Arabic) with the phrase "Our Struggle Continues against Occupation." Men are the major players in agricultural and animal-husbandry cooperatives, but

4. The Black Palestinians are believed to be descendants of Africans who settled in the region two to three hundred years ago. Although there is an African Quarter in the Old City in Jerusalem, most live in the Jordan Valley, particularly in Jericho and its environs.

village women are in the forefront of successful small-scale projects like this food-preserving cooperative. A sociologist who helped to design a cooperative training program later told me:

> The men scoff at these small-scale projects. They are only interested in the large ones. As a result, they have locked themselves out of some of the most important programs in economic development.

The fine line between women's work in the home—sewing, knitting, embroidery, food preparation—and their participation in what are clearly economic enterprises is crossed in projects like the Saer "production cooperative." Since the group had just finished packaging the crop of cucumbers that they had pickled and had not started processing the next product, only a handful of their fifteen members were present. "We are the youngest ones," they said, as they poured me a glass of orange juice from one of the foil containers in which they seal all their products. "More than half our group is over thirty." They watched intently as I took the first taste of the juice. It was a bit too sweet for a health-conscious Californian, but I smacked my lips enthusiastically anyhow.

As we talked, I learned that not only were these women among the youngest members, but they were also the team elected by the total group to run the operation: the overall coordinator and the distribution and financial coordinators. Only the production coordinator, who was pregnant, was missing.

The project, initially funded in 1988 by a foundation in Norway, had been the brainchild of one of the women's committees. "But," the trio of local women hastened to add proudly, "we have become practically self-sustaining by selling our juices, jams, and pickled vegetables." Reserving 30 percent of their sales for wages, they try to pay each member a minimum of one shekel (approximately fifty cents) an hour. "Of course not everyone works the same number of hours. It depends on her situation, like the woman who is the production coordinator, who takes more time off now because she is pregnant." Sensitivity to the needs and rhythms of their own lives was a hallmark of the women's cooperatives and one to which they proudly pointed. Yet, when one of the women commented "that's why it's better for women to run their own projects," the others laughed. I was not sure why, and when I pressed them, trying to figure out whether they thought this was just too daring to say, they only giggled more.

Part of the group's profits were plowed back into the project for the development of new products. In fact, the university student who was serving as my guide that day used the visit to discuss ideas for expansion. Located in the heart of the grape-producing area of the West Bank, the

cooperative members wanted to experiment with packaging grape leaves and were also considering drying and packaging parsley. But their sealing machine was broken and would have to be replaced. My guide helped them to calculate the costs: they would need the equivalent of twenty-five thousand dollars for three months as start-up money. As proud as the women were of having made their project self-sustaining, their plight made it clear that economic development still requires outside assistance, even for small-scale projects.

Education for the Future

George, our host for several nights in Bethlehem the previous January, had been very concerned about what was happening to his children. The repeated school closures had made a mockery of their education and, along with other parents, he had instituted stopgap measures, using their children's old schoolbooks to run makeshift classes.

By the time I returned in June, these early efforts were no longer seen as merely temporary remedies. Just as the initial boycott of Israeli goods had led to programs of self-sufficiency that were a building block for the future, the underground classes established in response to the school closures were being viewed as an opportunity to develop a Palestinian curriculum. For the first time since the occupation, Palestinian children could formally learn their own history, geography, and literature from an Arab perspective. Educator-activists were unrestrained in their enthusiasm for the popular education movement, and I was eager to see it in action. It was reminiscent of the Freedom Schools that civil-rights activists had founded in Mississippi in the 1960s to broaden the educational horizon of African-American children.

The plan had been carefully worked out: we were to go to Hebron, where a member of the Saer cooperative would meet us, and after visiting their project, we would proceed to a village not far away to see one of the "Freedom Schools." But life under occupation was unpredictable. At any time, roadblocks might be thrown up, curfews imposed, whole regions declared off limits. First, the university student who was accompanying me on this jaunt had been delayed at a police check and was late getting to the *servis* station in Jerusalem where we were meeting; then, as a result of a dawn raid on the village of Saer, the cooperative member who was coming to meet us in Hebron had difficulty getting out of the village. Finally, there was little traffic from Saer to the village where we were headed, and it took a while to hitch a ride there. By the time we arrived at al-Shach, it was almost noon and the popular education class was about to end.

The walls in the crude two-room stone hut that served as a classroom were bare, except for a piece of roughly cut slate that served as a blackboard. The few rickety chairs would not accommodate the thirty students who attended in two shifts, so most sat on the floor. Not more than two hundred yards away from this crude "school house" stood the new, well-equipped school that had been closed by the Israeli authorities.

The four young women who served as teachers did not seem to be fazed by the crude facilities, and their dozen or so students were completely engaged. Perhaps it was the novelty. A study made by a Palestinian educator had found that the children preferred these popular education classes, usually taught by young college students. Maybe it was because forbidden classes had been redefined as a political activity, another way to be involved in the *intifada.* As the few last stragglers left, I noticed that they made no effort to hide their book bags, an open defiance of the Israeli occupiers, who not only had closed the schools but also had banned these popular education classes.

As abortive as my visit to the popular education class had been, just seeing the intensity of the children and the teachers was enough. I was all keyed up and barely noticed the young boys who started to follow us as we walked out of the village. "Communists!" they screamed, as they menaced us with small pebbles. Was it because the women with me were members of one of the left-affiliated women's committees? Because we were walking with bare arms? Their taunts served as a clear signal that in this conservative region of al-Khalil (Hebron) there might be competing visions of the future, that not everyone embraced the visions embodied in some of the projects I had visited.

Kufr Nameh: Introduction to a Liberated Village

Set in the stony hills about twelve kilometers from Ramallah, the village of Kufr Nameh has approximately two thousand residents, two mosques, and followers of all the major PLO factions as well as of the two Islamist groups, HAMAS and Islamic Jihad. The old section of the village, its traditional stone buildings nestled into the lower hills, has been largely replaced by a newer neighborhood, which is oriented toward the road on the ridge above. The houses are sprawled out on each side of the street with olive trees filling the relatively large expanses of space between them.

Kufr Nameh gained a reputation in the early days of the intifada *because of its fierce opposition to the occupation. Settlers and soldiers alike were stoned if they drove through, forbidden Palestinian flags flew freely throughout the village, and anniversaries commemorating landmarks in the Palestinian resistance to Israeli incursion were celebrated openly. As a result of its militancy, the village has seen more than its share of* intifada *casualties. By June 1989, one and a half years after the start of the* intifada, *two villagers had been killed, one had been deported, countless others had been placed under administrative detention without trial, and five houses had been demolished.*

My initial visit to Kufr Nameh came about quite unexpectedly. After Jean-Paul, Jocelyne, and I had spent a morning in Ramallah at a kindergarten run by one of the women's committees,[1] a local activist picked me up there and brought me to her home. Ghada lived in an apartment in Qadura

1. Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC).

Refugee Camp with her ninety-year-old father and sixty-some-year-old mother. The camp, situated in the heart of Ramallah, is surrounded by an iron fence, and with its gray, two-story buildings it looks more like an urban housing project than a refugee camp. Ghada, an Iraqi-educated biology teacher in her late twenties, traced her feminism to the discovery in her early teens that her dying father was planning on bequeathing all his assets to his sons, leaving her nothing. "This is even in violation of Muslim law!" she exploded.[2] Spurred on by the ideas of Egyptian feminist Nawaal Saadawi, whose works she had read as a girl, Ghada launched a "fight for equal treatment" in her family.

As we spoke in her living room, the sounds of gunshots and scurrying feet out on the street could be heard. It was noon, the witching hour, when the confrontations with the soldiers so often occurred. We waited until the streets had cleared and then headed outside. I followed Ghada through the deserted, blistering hot streets to a large open space at the far edge of the city, where one lonely bus was parked. Only after we boarded did Ghada tell me that we were headed to Kufr Nameh.

The bus wended its way slowly up the curvy, hilly road. Outside the perimeter of a village it was forced to make a circuitous detour around a mound that the Israeli soldiers had piled high with boulders and dirt. At the side of road stood a demolished house and just a short distance away, a burned-out Israeli army jeep. I wondered which had come first.

The first houses of Kufr Nameh came into view as the bus cleared a last, steep rise. We dismounted with a few other passengers, including Ayad, a young man with whom Ghada had been chatting on the bus. He led us into a detached little building on a large, dusty plateau, where we were greeted by several men. I was not sure whether they were expecting us or whether they just happened to be visiting with one another, just as I was not sure whether Ayad was on the bus by prearrangement or not. Soon, others joined us and more tea was brought in as a group of close to a dozen gathered to listen to Nassim, the political prisoner who had just been released after more than three years. The village men, as well as Ghada, were all very respectful and interested in his story, but it was not much out of the ordinary for them. I, on the other hand, was caught up in the romance of it and felt that I was in the presence of a heroic figure.

Although everyone was attentive and quiet while he spoke, afterward there was bantering. When Ghada teased the men, asking where the women were and how many of their wives were members of the women's committee, they proclaimed, almost in unison, that they all were.

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2. According to Quranic law, daughters inherit half of what sons inherit.

On our way to meet with the women, the men gave us a short tour of the village. Ayad pointed proudly to the nationalist graffiti scrawled everywhere, the flags flying freely, and the monument erected to the memory of the two men slain during the *intifada.* The smoke billowing from a small, domed clay building caught my attention. Inside the *taboun* (traditional outdoor oven) a woman was working over a bed of hot coals. When she noticed me squatting outside and peering in, she signaled me to join her. I ignored the extreme heat and crawled inside to watch. She formed a handful of dough into a flat, almost pizzalike loaf, which she then laid directly on the hot coals, turning it once. After just a few minutes, she snatched the baked loaf from the heat and quickly flicked off any pieces of charcoal that had stuck to it. The woman watched with amusement as I tore a piece off the warm loaf she extended and displayed my pleasure with the taste of the chewy, slightly smoky-flavored bread. Having tasted that fresh *taboun*-baked bread, I understand why the very mention of it evokes such an emotion-laden response from Palestinians in the United States.

Ayad led us over several crumbled rock fences past one of the homes that had been demolished and deposited us at the newly built chicken hatchery. There Ali, an English-speaking member of the village agricultural cooperative, took over. He beckoned us into a dark, crowded basement where a crude, homemade incubator lined one wall of the narrow, earthen passageway. Next to it, a cage of fuzzy little chicks were chirping away. Around the corner, in a slightly larger space, a rooster and several hens scratched the ground of their coop. This cramped, makeshift hatchery did not look like much, Ali acknowledged. "But" he proclaimed confidently, "it is just the beginning."

After their displays of *intifada* activity, the men introduced us to the women. Three sisters-in-law greeted us as we entered a detached sitting room in one of the compounds off the highway. It was slightly smaller than the one in which we had visited with the men, and the informal arrangement of the vinyl sofa and chairs gave it a more lived-in look. The women, in their late twenties and early thirties, all wore printed scarves, knotted at the napes of their necks, and long red velour, robelike gowns—so common among villagers of their age that I came to view them as "transitional dress."[3] With great exuberance the women described the activities and program of their committee: the regular visits to the homes of the wounded and imprisoned, a demonstration of one thousand women on Interna-

3. It seemed that most married village women wore this attire during the day at home and in the village, saving their traditional, embroidered *thaubs* for special occasions.

tional Women's Day (March 8), a kindergarten for the village children, and a literacy class for the adult women.

Their recitation was fairly routine until they started talking about their own cooperative. Pointing to the parsley laid out for drying on a table in the corner, they began interrupting each other to add missed details. "You know *zaatar*?" they asked me. Although it is the word for the wild thyme that dots the hills in the spring, it is more commonly used to designate the condiment in which sesame seeds and salt are combined with the dried thyme. The collection of the wild herb had been a traditional activity of village women. Probably as an attempt both to suppress Palestinian national culture and to eliminate competition with their own commercially produced version of *zaatar,* the Israeli occupiers had declared the collection of the plants an illegal activity.

The roomful of women burst into laughter when Ghada commented, "Of course, that only made it more popular. Suddenly *everyone* wanted to go to the mountains to collect *zaatar.*" Most of the *zaatar* they produced was for their own use, and their "cooperative" was less an economic project than a collective act of civil disobedience that these peasants claimed as their own. They brought in a tray and showed me how to dip the fresh, *taboun*-baked bread first into a shallow bowl of olive oil and then into the *zaatar.* This was their world, their space, and the men who occasionally peered in as the women were talking about their activities either retreated or came in and sat respectfully silent. When I took out a camera to photograph the three activists and their children, the men withdrew.

About a week after my first visit to Kufr Nameh, I returned with Leila, a university student who was a member of another one of the women's committees.[4] She had arranged for a car to take us to a village women's sewing cooperative, but until we passed the burned-out jeep I did not know where we were headed. She directed the driver to park near a house set back from the road and led me down a slope to a wide, stone building. The word was sent out and a cluster of women gathered and ushered us into a small, empty room that served as their center. As they pulled chairs into a circle, others straggled in. It was a generally younger group than the one I had met with the previous week, and many of the eight women were dressed in patterned T-shirts and pants, their shoulder-length hair falling loosely around their faces. Most of the others wore plain, calf-length cotton dresses, and only one wore any kind of head scarf.

4. Union of Working Women's Committees (UWWC).

The small, dark, unadorned "center" in which we were meeting also served as a practice room for a village youth band, and their drums were stored along one wall. Next door, a larger room—also without electricity—served as the committee-run kindergarten. The teacher, a twenty-four-year-old mother of two, was the oldest of the committee activists who were present and was more at ease and outgoing than the younger women.

Leila and I worked well together. She had studied in the United States and was returning there to pursue a doctorate in linguistics. I was able to tell her what I was after, and she reformulated my questions rather than translating them literally. It was still difficult to get the younger women to elaborate their answers, for instance, to queries about what had attracted them to this particular women's committee. Most, it seemed, had joined a few years before, in their mid-teens, generally at the urging of a friend who was already involved. The programs of the group gave them something to do after they finished their schooling, they said. But the sewing cooperative consumed only a small portion of their time and served mainly as a fund-raising vehicle for the committee.

A couple of the teenagers became more lively when they talked about joining the international women's day demonstration three months earlier. The older village women wore their traditional *thaubs* for the event, but these younger women did not, they explained, "because it makes it harder to run away from the soldiers." Listening to them, I began to wonder if the women's committee was not primarily a way to open up space for women's participation in the *intifada.* Did it, I wondered, also provide an avenue for women to explore their own position in the society? The short, collective interview was not going to give me many clues to this complicated question. The young women did not say much about their own vision of the future, but I could not help noticing how they nodded in vigorous agreement with the kindergarten teacher's optimistic prediction for the future:

> We are not going to go back. From what I see, women have been sharing in the *intifada,* perhaps contributing even more than the men. Women will not agree to go back. . . . And the men now have a level of social awareness that they need the women—not just for the *intifada,* but to build our Palestinian state.

Kufr Nameh had been my introduction to village life. I had seen the beginnings of an agricultural cooperative and talked with village members of the women's committees. But I was frustrated by these short forays and was looking forward to my visits to Issawiyeh and Gaza where I would stay the night. Little did I suspect when Leila and I left Kufr Nameh that I would return many more times over the course of the next several years and would spend many a night there, too.

Issawiyeh: Winds of Change, I

Issawiyeh lies only a few minutes away from the heart of East Jerusalem, but its old stone buildings clinging to the hills have helped it retain the feel of a village. Following the 1948–1949 war its western border was designated part of the no-man's-land that separated the Jordanian-held part of the West Bank from Israeli-held territory. After the 1967 war the village lost much of its acreage when the Israelis annexed East Jerusalem and expropriated the land on which they built the French Hill settlement. The Israelis consider the village a part of "unified Jerusalem." The residents have militantly opposed Israeli occupation since 1967 and have been active participants in the intifada. *In 1989 the Israelis charged that Issawiyeh was a stronghold of the* intifada *and that the UNLU communiqués to the population were being printed there.*

The population of five thousand belongs to twelve clans, eleven of which have ancient historic roots there, including the Essawis; the other was originally from al-Khalil (Hebron). Today, with so much of their land lost, many of the residents commute to Jerusalem. Despite its small scale, one of the things that has put Issawiyeh on the map is the enamel ceramic workshop, which I had visited briefly the previous winter. The Women's Action Committee (WAC) established the workshop before the intifada, *and it has become a model of the small-scale women's economic projects. Its pastoral and political plaques have become very popular both among locals and international visitors.*

The buses and *servises* went whizzing by the sidewalk where I stood waiting to meet Nancy, the member of the women's committee (WAC) who was going to accompany me to the village of Issawiyeh. They were filled with

Palestinians going into the Old City to work, shop, and do business. The only sign of the massive Israeli show of force that had dominated this same corner one week earlier, during the Omar Qassem funeral, was a police car parked up the street. From that spot they had a clear view down the *wadi* (gully) to the deceased's family home, where streams of people were still arriving to pay their respects.

Issawiyeh came into view almost immediately as we rounded a curve. Hugging the contours of the terrain, the village lay just past the gaping wounds in the landscape created by the continuous expansion of the French Hill settlement. The village was quiet and the streets were empty as the taxi drove in, but watchful eyes were peering from behind closed curtains, carefully monitoring the arrival of strangers. We pulled up in front of the building that housed the ceramic workshop and ascended the flight of stairs.

Khadija, the mid-thirties woman who served as the supervisor of the ceramic enamel workshop, was alone, making preparations for the day's work. The younger members of the workshop arrived a few minutes later, and we smiled at each other in mutual recognition. I had been introduced to them the previous winter, when I had been given a brief tour of the workshop. It was warm and they were dressed in light cotton blouses and slacks. Many of them sported gold earrings in place of the ceramic ones bearing the colors of the Palestinian flag that they had showed off previously. I took this change to be a sign that they were investing their money in gold jewelry, as Palestinian women traditionally had done. But they explained that it was because it had become too dangerous to display the flag colors so openly in the village. The soldiers had hurt a baby when they pulled off his red, green, black, and white T-shirt, they told me.

The young women of the workshop seemed more sure of themselves than they had the previous winter, and though still a bit reserved, the veteran members were not as shy as their newest, recent member. The young women no longer considered their work merely as an activity of the women's committee. Now viewing it as a serious job in a production unit, they got down to work very quickly, hammering the brass frames, etching the outlines of designs, and preparing the ceramic enamel plaques for firing. Their concentration was broken momentarily by noises outside the window. Across the road and down the slope, a Jerusalem police van was parked, its blue-uniformed occupants standing outside, performing what appeared to be a strange ballet with long poles. It took a moment to see that their movements were more purposeful: they were trying to remove the Palestinian flag that was flying from the telephone wires. Though careful to position themselves so they would not be spotted by the police, the villagers came out of their houses

to watch. The sounds of their laughter mingled with ours as we all reacted to the utter absurdity of the situation.

Fadwa and Khawla, in turn, took breaks from their work so that I could interview them. Curious but polite, the other members kept peeking in the doorway, pretending just to be passing. I interviewed Khadija later in the afternoon, but the newest member of the group declined. She was as reticent as Fadwa and Khawla had seemed just six months earlier. Now they both exuded confidence and challenged Khadija, their elder and the supervisor, when they did not agree with her. In a group discussion about the workshop, which included Khadija, these younger members spoke enthusiastically of transforming their operation into a real cooperative, in which the members would share decision-making and responsibility.

Fadwa led us to her house so that I could interview her sister, Siham, the freckled, red-headed, fifth member of the workshop, who was on maternity leave. (A sixth member was out sick that day.) The relatively new, sprawling building that we entered was home to Fadwa's and Siham's large, militant, extended family, many of whom came in and out as we talked. The walls of the living room were decorated with some of the ceramic enamel plaques that the two sisters had made.

Almost before we were seated and coffee and fruit were brought in, a third sister described how soldiers had fired a tear gas canister directly into the house. Hit at close range by the canister, she had suffered kidney damage and lamented that she could have no more children. She and their mother joined us during the interview of Siham and often chimed in. Zam Zam, the mother of nine, dressed in a traditional *thaub,* looked older than her forty-eight years. Animated, assertive, and completely self-possessed, she asked me, "How do you see my daughters?" Before I had a chance to mumble more than a monosyllabic response, she puffed up with pride, continuing:

> I am very proud of them. My raising them made them courageous like me.
> They don't care;
> they are not afraid. They act like I act;
> they talk like I talk.
> And we like responsibility. We accept responsibility;
> we don't say something and then run away from it.
> Even in front of the government,
> I confront them and tell them what I think.

Eager to tell *her* story, Zam Zam interrupted her daughter, when I asked Siham if her own marriage had been arranged. "These things used to be,"

the mother answered. "They used to force the daughter without asking her." She then recounted how her family had arranged her engagement to one of two brothers. But when her older brother had come to consult her, she had thought about it for a while and decided on the other brother, the *babu* (mute), feeling she would have a better life with him. I wondered whether she had also thought that she might have more control over her life.

There is no sign language taught in Palestine, and even though the family has worked out an internal language, Zam Zam must serve as an intermediary with the outside world. Consequently, she carries enormous weight in family decisions. For instance, she sat in on the meeting her eldest son had with the members of the women's committee who came to recruit her daughters to join the workshop. Afterward her husband had little choice but to agree when Zam Zam asked, "What's wrong with it if they work and get themselves busy?"

When Siham was able to get the floor back from her mother—respectfully, but authoritatively—she described how she had become politically active through her singing. Known for her beautiful voice, she was called upon to sing at local events and gradually came to know the women in the committee. Married a year earlier, at nineteen, to a young man who was working as a waiter at a hotel, Siham was pleased with her new role as a mother. She was planning to take another six months of maternity leave and then to return to the ceramic workshop. The work was very important to her, and she loved the feeling of accomplishment of producing something with her own hands. Besides, her earnings would help her and her husband to build their own house and move out on their own—away from her in-laws, she added, with a snicker. "And then," Siham emphatically announced, "when we live by ourselves, my husband will help me in everything."

It was not only what Siham and the others said when I interviewed them, but how they reacted, and what happened in their own houses that convinced me that meaningful changes were taking place. When Ayda, with whom I was going to spend the night, returned from her job at the women's committee office in Beit Hanina, she served as my translator for a late-afternoon "bull session" with the workshop members. Chatting over a last cup of tea, I inquired whether there was anything they wanted to ask *me*. Their curiosity overcame their embarrassment, and they asked how old I was. Reacting with astonishment when they learned that I was older than most of their own mothers, Fadwa and Khawla both blurted out, "But you look younger than my mother." When I suggested that perhaps it was because their mothers had led such hard lives, had had many children, and

had lived under occupation, they insisted: "No, it's because you work [outside the home] and like what you do."

I followed Ayda out the door, and we tramped up the hill, almost to the top, to a house near the edge of the village. Pushing open the swinging door in the wall surrounding the sprawling compound, I noticed that the home of the Essawi family, into which Ayda had married, was hidden from the road outside, although they had a commanding view of it. This fit their historic role in the village as one of the leading clans, with large landholdings.

The room in which I visited for the next several hours, downing cup after cup of tea and coffee, was very modest. It normally served as a bedroom, although an array of chairs also filled the room. Some of the family members sat on one of the high beds, while several children dozed on the other one, bored by the adult conversation. In the next room lay the ailing grandmother of Ayda's husband. Whenever another member of the family arrived, before joining our conversational circle, they first went and paid respects to her.

The smaller children who ran in and out did not speak English, but most of the adults did. The Essawi family was more educated and cosmopolitan than the al-Awad family with whom I had spent part of the afternoon, but just as militant. The father continued to challenge the confiscation of his own and the village land. One son, Hani (Ayda's husband), now a journalist, had been imprisoned as an eighteen-year-old in 1968, just one year after the beginning of the occupation. He had been the youngest member of a cell that had stored arms in the nearby mountains. The daughter who had just returned from the United States after completing her doctorate was a known activist there. Another son, an academician with whom I had been trying to make contact—and who I realized only later was a member of this same family—was at the time the head of the faculty union at Bir Zeit University.

Their four- and six-year-old sons stirred as Hani and Ayda carried them to the car to head home at ten o'clock. By the time we arrived at their doorstep, a few kilometers away, the children were wide awake. They sat sedately, drawing with crayons, as they waited for Ayda to lay out the late-evening snack of *hummus,* cheese, and olives.

The large hallway where we ate at a low table was filled with stacks of newspapers in Hebrew, and I noticed later that the bookshelves in the living room were lined with mainly Hebrew titles. Hani had learned Hebrew during his ten years in prison. Until the Israelis had closed down his office shortly after the start of the *intifada,* he had had a news bureau that

provided translations from the Hebrew press. Now fluent in more than three languages, he told me how important he thought it was for Palestinians to learn Hebrew in order to know what the Israelis were saying and thinking.

The stone house, with its two large living/sleeping rooms, had been built by Hani's grandfather in the 1930s. Following the 1948–1949 war the house sat empty, stranded in the area between Israeli and Jordanian control known as no-man's-land. It sits on a little island, straddling the land that his family still maintains and the land that was confiscated from the village of Issawiyeh—the land on which the French Hill settlement, Haddassah Hospital, and Hebrew University had all been built.

The next morning, awakened by the sun streaming through the window, I unlocked the front door and went outside to enjoy the view. But instead of a lovely landscape, what I saw were the construction cranes atop French Hill, ready for further expansion of the settlement.

The children must have heard me open the door; they rushed out in their pajamas to greet me, play hide-and-seek, and pose for photographs. After a while, Hani called them inside, and when he had finished bathing and dressing them, he herded them into the car and drove off for fresh pita bread. Ayda was inside the kitchen, getting a head start on the preparation of the meal they would eat when they all returned in the afternoon. The division of labor in the household was unfolding just as she had described it when I interviewed her:

> My husband, all the work for the children,
> he does that. He feeds them and washes them every day and dresses them.
> And all the work for the home, I do.

We sat down to a traditional Palestinian breakfast after Hani returned with fresh pita bread and white cheese, and I thought about the emerging "new man" I was meeting in Occupied Palestine.

Building her home life on shared responsibility made it easier for Ayda to juggle work inside and outside the home. When I learned a couple of months later that Hani had been placed in administrative detention, I wondered how Ayda was faring. She probably had to get up much earlier in order to prepare the children for the day and catch the local cooperatively owned bus to get to work in Beit Hanina.[1]

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1. Cut off from regular bus service, the villagers had taken matters into their own hands and formed a cooperative company, every household contributing—sometimes with money raised by the women selling their jewelry—to the purchase of a used bus. Even after they made enough to buy a second, newer bus, it didn't make many runs in the morning.

Return to Gaza

When I returned to Gaza City in June 1989 with Jocelyne and Jean-Paul, it was more of an armed camp than it had been six months earlier. There were jeeps, tanks, and soldiers stationed everywhere, and the giant black X's painted by the soldiers to hide the Palestinian graffiti on the storefronts were more prominent and ominous than before. In contrast to East Jerusalem, where the warmer weather had drawn more people onto the streets, Gaza City was practically deserted.

Arriving at Marna House, we were greeted by the Beirut-based owner of the family-run inn, who visited with us while we waited for the contacts who were to take us to Jabalya that day and to one of the health clinics the next. Her mother was French, and after she married a Gazan, she lived "behind the veil," as she put it, a rather sheltered life. The innkeeper was delighted to converse in French with Jocelyne and Jean-Paul. In turn, Jocelyne, whose English was not as good as her husband's, was thrilled. For once she would not have to strain to understand or wait for Jean-Paul to translate. The tables were turned, and as they chatted in French, I had to strain to catch snatches of the conversation.

Our guide turned out to be Ossam, the journalist who six months earlier had told our delegation about his imprisonment in Ansar III. Undaunted by the constant threat of administrative detention, he was continuing to work for several European news bureaus and to escort foreign delegations.

When we arrived at Jabalya camp, the atmosphere was clearly more tense than on my previous visit. A one-week curfew had just been lifted, and

two youths (one of whom was from the West Bank and was just visiting his uncle) had been killed only two days before. On that hot June day there were no swarms of children following us, but the potential ire of the soldiers at having foreign visitors there documenting conditions was still a threat. So, once again I found myself scurrying along the narrow pathways—still a confusing maze to my outsider's eyes.

We reached our destination with little difficulty, a semi-open structure protected from the elements only by a corrugated tin roof that barely covered half of the space. The women of the committee called it their center and, among other things, it served as a sewing workshop. A large table, on which the sewing teacher had spread out patterns, filled the covered area of the enclosure. In the uncovered space, pushed against the back wall, were two old treadle sewing machines—much more practical than electric machines, which would be useless whenever the Israelis cut off the electricity.

The eight sewing workshop members clustered around me as I showed them photographs of the recent Mother's Day demonstration that my Los Angeles group, Feminists in Support of Palestinian Women, had held. Suhara, in her pink smock-like blouse, her cousin in a tank top and blue-jeans jacket, and the sewing teacher in a very chic head covering and a long, modest dress enthusiastically passed the photographs around, pointing to our signs: Free the Mothers of Palestine: End Israeli Occupation, Stop Arrest and Torture of Palestinian Women. After a short while they all returned to the large work table to continue their course, and Suhara sat with us and detailed the work of the committee. A colleague from the women's committee in Gaza City had joined us by then and served as my translator.

After the women completed their six-month course, they would be able to manufacture clothes for their families and earn some money by selling the goods they sewed. Suhara was pleased with the notion that as the women were gaining skills that fostered their economic independence, they were also contributing to the Palestinian economy. In addition the sewing courses were an avenue for increased involvement of women outside the home, what many activists characterized as "a crack in the door."

The heat of the afternoon began to subside, and Suhara left off her discussion with me and started to braid red flowers into a wreath. It was going to be used in the march and visit to the home of the eighteen-year-old who had been killed by Israeli soldiers two days earlier. The translator left, taking my French traveling partners with her back to Gaza City. I was on my own, with only ten words of Arabic, a dictionary, and a host of friendly

women. Some, in the course of the evening, were able to exchange a few words of English with me, including Suhara, whose English improved as the evening wore on. To my embarrassment, my Arabic did not.

Making final preparations for their march, the women looked me over and decided that I had better be disguised, that my light brown hair, short-sleeved blouse, and pants should be covered. This was both to show respect for the bereaved family we were about to visit and, more important, to shield me from the soldiers' watchful eyes. If I were detected, it would mean trouble for all of us: the camp would very likely be punished by the imposition of another curfew, and I would surely be escorted out. As I donned the long black skirt and the white scarf that covered my head and sleeves, the militant "old woman" about whom I had been hearing came to greet me. A smiling woman no older than I, perhaps even younger, gave me a big hug and posed for a picture with a clenched fist. She also recited a litany of nationalist slogans, the militant tone of which was obvious, even though I could not understand her words.

A core group of the younger women began to gather. Suhara had changed clothes, as had her cousin and the other young women who had earlier been wearing T-shirts and tank tops. They were now all wearing long grey or blue *jilbabs* (long frock coats), their heads covered with the chiffon-like white scarves characteristic of Gaza. They hid their wreath in a plastic bag, along with my camera, gave me a last inspection, and threw up their hands, laughing at my walking oxfords and grey pants peeking out underneath the long black skirt. A shoddy disguise at best, especially since I never did master keeping the white gauze scarf over my head and my arms at the same time. In any event, they planned to shield me as we emerged from the narrow pathways onto a wider uphill street. They kept stopping, looking back and ahead to make sure there were no soldiers. The group gained in numbers, swelling from the handful that had started out from the workshop to almost one hundred women. As I glanced back on our procession, all I could see was a sea of white scarves; looking forward, the leaders had become emboldened and raised their wreath high over their heads. Emboldened, but still nervous. And as I listened to my own breathing during this procession, I recalled the way the children had hyperventilated from a combination of fear and excitement as they had followed our procession of foreigners six months earlier.

The women held onto me tightly and surrounded me so that I would not be spotted. Periodically, they would take my camera out of the plastic bag so that I could photograph our procession. By the time we reached the home of the family, a building that appeared to be under construction, we were a mass of women, followed and cheered on by a group of children.

A large canopy was raised in a clearing in front of the building, and men and boys were seated on stools under the canopy, drinking tea. The women of the family were inside, and we climbed a flight of stairs and filed through the room, each saying the appropriate few words of condolence. Two Modigliani-like, longfaced sisters, who were almost carbon copies of their sad-faced mother, greeted us. The procession of women, accompanied by several exuberant young children, proceeded to climb another flight of open stairs to the roof, where the women's contingent stood ululating and chanting nationalist slogans.

As we descended and filed past the men's area outside, I was beckoned to come and take a picture of the banner: a photo of the dead teenager, surrounded by appropriate slogans and the colors of the Palestinian flag. Suhara started to join me, but a hand went up, stopping her. My instinctive feminist reaction was of mild outrage. It is still difficult for me to accept with equanimity the separation of the sexes. I have raged against it since childhood, when I learned that the orthodox *schul* (synagogue) to which my great-aunt belonged regularly segregated her, unlike the one I attended. But this was not my battle, and it was not one of the major problems facing these Palestinian women. Remembering my purpose in being there and their purpose in hosting me, with all the attendant risks—hoping that I could serve as an avenue of communication to the outside world—I recovered my sense of proportion and entered the men's domain to take the photograph of the banner. Once again, as a foreign woman I was exempt from the traditional segregation of the sexes, just as I had been six months earlier at the wake in Nablus.

Only a half hour later a patrol of soldiers ripped up the banner, tore down the canopy, and smashed all the glasses and dishes in sight, simply because the red, white, green, and black colors of the Palestinian flag were displayed. At least no one was shot, as so often happens at funerals when coffins are draped in the forbidden flag.

When I rejoined the women, their numbers had thinned. Many had returned to their more mundane tasks at home. Wending our way to Suhara's family's home, after a brief condolence visit at another house, a group of *shabab* signaled us to hurry. By a series of whistles, the word had spread that there were patrols throughout the camp. We quickly crossed the wide lane ahead of us and then stopped to look back, hugging the sides of a building to keep out of sight. No sooner had we cleared the area than a patrol of perhaps twenty Israeli soldiers came chugging up the path we had just abandoned. I marveled at how the *shabab* served as the eyes and ears of the camp, not letting anything escape their notice, alert to every movement. We joined Suhara's brothers, sisters-in-law, sister, parents, aunt,

uncle, and cousin in the room where they were all gathered around the television. Their house, a series of six adjoining nine-by-twelve-foot rooms situated around a very narrow concrete central patio, was brightened by a scattering of potted plants. Suhara's sister-in-law spoke some English, though she claimed to have forgotten most of it in the eight years since her marriage, during which time, she complained, she had done nothing but sit at home. To my amazement, she started to talk openly to me about her husband's infertility. The other members of the family did not fully understand our conversation, but she made them aware of the topic by deliberately sprinkling in a few Arabic words. Perhaps this was her way of asserting to them that her not bearing children, considered a misfortune in her culture, was not her fault. I wondered if my foreignness once again was being used to deliver a message, this time internally.

We were joined by several women members of the family, including Suhara's rather shy nineteen-year-old cousin, who was her best friend and future sister-in-law. The women all adjourned to another room, where we sat on the floor mats and helped ourselves to the array of bread, vegetable dishes, and *hummus* placed in front of us. Later in the evening I learned that the vegetables we had eaten all came from the *intifada* garden of Suhara's uncle.

Jabalya camp has lived under an 8:00 P.M.–4:00 A.M. curfew almost since the *intifada* began there on December 9, 1987.[1] As the curfew hour approached, Suhara consulted with various members of the family. The smell of tear gas had wafted into the compound, and there were reports of soldiers swarming throughout the camp. The family was concerned about my safety and about possible retribution, should I be discovered staying with them. They decided it would be best if Suhara took me to her uncle's house, just outside the camp. There was not enough time to get off the streets by the beginning of curfew if we walked, so Suhara, her cousin, and I rushed to a waiting taxi to be driven the five short blocks to Tal al-Zaatar, a privately developed neighborhood. Named after the refugee camp in Lebanon where a wholesale slaughter took place in 1976 (six years before the massacres at Sabra and Shatila), this neighborhood had open spaces and signs of greenery, in contrast to the concrete barrenness of the camp.

1. This curfew, which has been shortened to 3:00 A.M., is routine. The camp residents are also subject to frequently imposed curfews of anywhere from one day to weeks at a time, with only an occasional one- or two-hour respite. During the Gulf War, the camp residents, as most other Palestinians under occupation, were under curfew for forty days.

Suhara's uncle was an UNRWA worker inside the camp and lived with his wife and two young children in their newly built three-room house. Depending on the circumstances, other members of the family often slept at the house, and later that evening another cousin of Suhara's arrived to spend the night. As in most of Occupied Palestine, young men often sleep at different sites every night, hoping to avoid the possibility of arrest and administrative detention. Their youthfulness is enough to make them suspect in the eyes of the Israelis.

We sat under a crescent moon on blankets spread over the sandy soil alongside the house next to the large garden. The only sound besides our voices was the occasional clucking of the ducks from a shed off to the side. Their eggs, and sometimes their meat, served as food for the extended family.

If it had not been for the long political discussion with a half dozen young men who had come to join us, the Israeli occupation would have felt far away. Suhara remained an active participant, often engaging in heated exchanges with the men. It was clear that she held her own and commanded their respect. Once again I was struck by how traditions like the separation of the sexes that had irked me earlier could so easily hide many of the real changes in the relationships between men and women.

In the midst of our conversation we heard running footsteps out on the street. Rather, my Palestinian hosts, with their heightened sensitivity to every neighborhood sound, heard them. One of the group rushed to the street, calling to me: "Do you want to see our Palestinian army?" The "army" consisted of two *kuffiyah*-masked youths probably no more than twelve years old. They were madly dashing from house to house delivering the text of a speech just given by George Habash, a leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the factions of the PLO and among the more than two hundred organizations banned by the Israelis.

That evening was a political lesson, one which impressed me more forcefully six months later as I walked through Kufr Nameh one evening. It was the Palestinians who really controlled the streets and neighborhoods of the refugee camps and villages. The attempts by the Israelis to exert their authority, with their raids, their patrols, and even their tear gas and live bullets, ultimately were transitory.

After the young men left, Suhara and I worked on her English, and she tried to teach me a few words of Arabic. But we were not talking the language she had learned at the Islamic University, where she had been studying literature before its closure, nor the vocabulary taught by the traveler's language book used by the Englishwoman who conducted occasional classes in the camp. This was the lexicon of the *intifada:* "curfew";

"liberation"; "demonstration"; "self-determination." She repeated each word and carefully copied the English spelling into her notebook.

That night I shared a room with Suhara and her cousin, sleeping on mats on the floor. Her uncle, his wife, and their two children all slept in the Western-style bed in another room, and the youthful cousin hiding out there slept on the floor of the third room. We all stirred at dawn when our host left the house but did not start our day until a couple of hours later, with a cup of Arabic coffee. By daylight I was able to get a better glimpse of the neighborhood, with its many gardens and a single shop. The family's own vegetable patch was filled with corn, squash, tomatoes, and eggplant.

Our walk back into the camp along dusty avenues seemed shorter and less menacing than our ride had been the previous evening. The women's committee activists were all preparing to go into Gaza City to join a sit-in at the International Red Cross center and a memorial march for Omar Qassem, the dead political prisoner.

The last I saw of Suhara was at the UNRWA clinic, where we had walked to find a taxi to take me into Gaza City. The streets and marketplace were filled with women, shopping and exchanging stories about the previous night's raid on the wake.

By the time I arrived back in Gaza City, after several mixups and the difficulty in getting a car to take me there, everyone had left Marna House. I took a taxi and went on my own over to the International Red Cross center, where the demonstration and sit-in were being held. Mobs of women, most with their heads covered, wearing either the long grey *jilbab* (frock coat) or long black skirts, were packed onto the steps and porch of the building, each holding a picture of Omar Qassem. On the lawn a group of young men wearing black ski masks posed theatrically behind a large banner.

The masked young men led the procession to the cemetery, where the Gaza citizenry could pay their respects to Omar Qassem at a commemorative funeral. As the young men filed out from the Red Cross grounds, more than a hundred women followed, while others stayed behind to continue the sit-in. The small band of no more than two hundred people that moved down the street was defiant.

Young men monitored the march from the sidelines, nervously—perhaps even hopefully—glancing back to see if the soldiers were following. As the procession turned the corner to enter the cemetery, they were joined by scores of other Gazans. Fearful of a confrontation on the street, these denizens had driven to the cemetery to join the procession. They filed behind the marchers and followed them through the cactus-filled cemetery to a canopy where the memorial service would take place.

I did not see any of the women from the Jabalya women's committee. They were not among the crowd of white-scarved women holding aloft the outlawed Palestinian flag on the way to the cemetery. Perhaps they never made it into town. There was a rumor that the camp had been placed under twenty-four-hour curfew again shortly after I left.

Jerusalem: Pages from a Notebook, III

I came out of a deep sleep sometime before midnight, alarmed by what sounded like gunshots. They continued on and off for an hour. Kathy told me the next morning that she had reacted the same way when she first heard them several nights before. It turned out to be fireworks on French Hill, one of the nearby Israeli settlements. They were set off in celebration of the anniversary of the Israeli conquest of East Jerusalem, what they called the reunification of Jerusalem. Did they really believe that the Palestinians in East Jerusalem shared their reality, their vision? Did not the settlers walking around the Old City in shorts with submachine guns slung over their shoulders make them understand?

I had on occasion seen these machine-gun-toting civilians wandering around the Old City. But except for French Hill, the Israeli settlement I could see from the Jerusalem-Ramallah road or from Issawiyeh, I really did not have a clear picture of the settlements that ringed Jerusalem. So I eagerly accepted Kathy's invitation to join a Scandinavian group she was leading on a driving tour of these settlements.

As we circled high above the city on the specially built highway that connects the settlements in "the ring around Jerusalem," I could appreciate more fully the desperate feeling of the Palestinians that Jerusalem was lost. From the road near Lifta, a Palestinian village destroyed in 1948 and more recently used as a hideout by a cell of the terrorist Jewish Underground,[1] we

1. The Terrorists against Terror group, known as the TNT, operated from 1978 to 1984. The cell known as the Tribe of Judah, which operated out of the abandoned, crumbling buildings of Lifta, tried in 1984 to blow up al-Aqsa Mosque.

had a bird's-eye view of the dense mass of buildings on the hillsides. The separate settlements were beginning to reach toward each other, spreading in amoeba-like fashion in a tight noose around East Jerusalem. There were a few pockets of resistance, like the Palestinian family who had refused to leave and whose small stone house was surrounded by the ugly grey buildings of Gilo settlement. Their presence probably did not puncture the illusion that most Jewish families living in this ring of settlements around Jerusalem held onto: that they were simply living in the suburbs.

The Israelis were not only busy building housing for the exclusive use of Jews; they were also destroying the homes of Palestinians. Walking through the Old City one morning, I stepped into a shop to buy some pieces of coral I noticed in the window of a small jewelry store. "I know you," the young man tending the store said, when I walked in. It took several minutes before he figured it out: "You came to my house, don't you remember? The house that was going to be sealed." Then it came back. One evening a week earlier, a Palestinian friend had taken me to the apartment of a neighbor, in a building just behind his, up a dirt road off the Jerusalem-Ramallah highway. One of the sons in the family had been accused of throwing a petrol bomb. Without any proof offered, and without the benefit of a trial, he had been placed in administrative detention, and the apartment in which his large family had lived was going to be sealed, leaving ten people homeless. The family was luckier than most whose apartments or houses were demolished or sealed; they had been given notice and were able to salvage their possessions, which they had been in the process of packing. Their almost empty apartment had looked a bit like a theater, with its set of four fake pillars in the living room all painted in the colors of the Palestinian flag. As we had been about to leave, after commiserating with them, the younger son—the one I later met in the shop—had given me a woven friendship bracelet with "Palestine" worked into the red, green, black, and white background.

After that visit, whenever I had passed the site of the building off the Ramallah-Jerusalem road, I had looked for a clue as to what had happened. "They have not yet sealed up the apartment," he told me, "but we are expecting it at any time." Sure enough, a few days later, on my way back to Jerusalem, I noticed a big Red Cross tent set up on the dirt slope to accommodate the family. The authorities had accomplished their mission and the family was homeless, the offending nationalist pillars in their living room sealed safely away.

I spent most of my time out of Jerusalem. But on the days of general strikes, when there was no transportation, I either conducted business in

East Jerusalem or walked into West Jerusalem to mail tapes from the post office or to visit with some of the Israeli women activists.

One day, while I was poring over back copies of the newspaper at the *Al-Fajr English Weekly* office, I was distracted and fascinated by the visit of a bearded man in a long black frock coat and fedora, the garb of an orthodox rabbi. It was impossible not to eavesdrop on the conversation between him and the staff of the paper. "You know, we are the bridge between the Israelis and the Palestinians; and the two-state solution is a bridge, too." Bemused, but very respectful, two of the staff debated with him. After he left, they told me that he was Rabbi Hirsch, the "foreign minister" of Neturei Karta, the orthodox Jewish anti-Zionist group, who considered themselves and were accepted as Palestinians.[2]

My curiosity was piqued about Neturei Karta, but since it was so hot, I generally dressed in short sleeves when I walked, and I knew better than to venture with such "immodest" dress into Mea Sharim, their orthodox neighborhood bordering East Jerusalem. Instead, when I went into West Jerusalem, I walked along the walls of the Old City, up to Jaffa Road, one of the main commercial arteries leading to the heart of West Jerusalem.

One day, arriving back in East Jerusalem after the noontime closing, hungry and eager to escape the midday heat, I ventured into West Jerusalem. Heading up Jaffa Road, I ducked into one of the first restaurants I saw, "The Morocco." Although kosher food was the fare, the surroundings felt terribly familiar, and the Moroccan-born Israeli waiters looked very much like the Palestinians with whom I had been spending time. In fact, I had to suppress a "*shokran*" (thank you in Arabic), when my food was set down. I was somewhat embarrassed that I did not know the appropriate Hebrew expression.

The streets were lively with people going about their business, and I was dumbstruck by how far this world in West Jerusalem was from Arab East Jerusalem, just fifteen minutes away. It was not only the contrast between the two worlds that upset me, but that I was free to wander around West Jerusalem while my Palestinian friends were unwelcome there. Many of them were even forbidden from entering the city, which, before 1948, might have been their family home. I picked up the film I needed, mailed some papers from the post office, and headed immediately back to East Jerusalem, where Palestinians, too, could enjoy themselves at the rooftop restaurant of the National Palace Hotel.

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2. Two years later I would have the chance to interview this Jewish Palestinian, whose group was subsequently represented on the National Guidance Committee which accompanied the Palestinian delegation to Madrid.

Inside the Green Line: From Apathy to Activism

I walked up the hill separating Palestinian East Jerusalem from Israeli West Jerusalem and stood on the little island where several streets intersected, trying to figure out which direction to head. "Near the Knesset," Tikva Parnass had instructed me to tell the taxi driver when she gave me directions to her apartment for the meeting with members of Women's Organization for Political Prisoners, an Israeli group. Getting no help from several pedestrians, I approached a policeman. He spoke no English and beckoned a couple of young men who were passing, wet towels draped over their shoulders, gym bags in hand. They pointed me in the right direction, but warned as they hailed a taxi for me: "Be careful. You shouldn't be seen talking to the police." Were they Palestinians, I wondered? Even there, in West Jerusalem—which I found so unfamiliar—were the Palestinians watching out for their foreign visitor?

The taxi wound its way down tree-shaded streets and I entered a different world. Tikva's small rooftop apartment was cozy and felt familiar with its slightly bohemian look, Indian and South American textiles hanging from the walls and flung across the sofa. It had an informal air about it, the furniture arranged in two semicircles, so different from the formal alignment of chairs against the walls that marked Palestinian sitting rooms. As fervent as Tikva and the women from the Women's Organization for Political Prisoners (WOPP) were, and as obsessed as they were with their work against the occupation, they were relatively relaxed. There were not the constant, furtive glances at the door whenever a noise was heard. And as modest as Tikva's life style was, it was perfectly natural for her to serve a

rich pastry with coffee, a form of hospitality the Palestinians could no longer afford.

The three women with whom I met found their task frustrating, but their persistence in trying to ease the conditions of Palestinian women prisoners was beginning to pay off. Their organization (WOPP) had retained a lawyer, and through her they were often able to obtain information about the prisoners, serving as the only source of news for the Palestinian families. They had also made arrangements with the prison authorities to send in sanitary napkins and other necessities to the women. Tikva described their work as "building real solidarity on the ground, without big words." The three women from Women's Organization for Political Prisoners did not expect laurels for their work and quite matter-of-factly described how quite a few of their members had been arrested and detained for several hours:

> We were protesting the terrible conditions in the compound. And at least two hundred Palestinians were waiting to see their imprisoned family member. The officers told the Palestinians they would be denied the visits if the women did not stop their demonstration and leave. The families told us to continue, so we had Palestinians and Israelis demonstrating and united against the authorities.

The youngest of the trio was born in Israel and raised on a kibbutz. Feeling that her life there was too far removed from the reality of what was really happening in Israel, she left. "But," she told me, "it took a long time to become an activist." The two older women were both from families whose parents had been born in Palestine. As teenagers they had served in the military during the 1948–1949 war but have since become vocal opponents of Zionism.

I stayed and visited longer with Tikva after the other two left. She recounted how difficult it was to stop using the language of Zionism even after she became a critic of it. The sixth generation on her mother's side to be born in Palestine, and a fighter in the Palmach at the age of nineteen,[1] it took Tikva more than twenty years to shake the feeling of being blasphemous when she started referring to the "war of independence", instead, as the "1948–1949 war." More than merely a linguistic convention, this difference reflects a consciousness about the struggle for the territory claimed by both Jewish Zionists and Palestinian Arabs. Tikva is one of those

1. The Palmach (an abbreviation of the Hebrew *peluggat mahatz*, meaning shock companies) operated underground from its formation in 1941, as part of the Haganah, to May 1948, when it became incorporated into the new Israel Defense Army.

rare Israelis who regularly and freely crosses between Green Line Israel and Occupied Palestine, both literally and figuratively.

It was not much past ten when Tikva called the taxi company, but they refused to pick me up when the dispatcher learned I was going to East Jerusalem. She cajoled him, telling him I was going to the Ambassador Hotel, near French Hill. On the way there (the hotel was across the street from Kathy's apartment), he asked, "Why do you want to stay there? Why don't you stay in West Jerusalem?" Turning the tables, I asked, "Why not?" Predictably, he replied, "It's not safe." Funny, I thought; the only real threat I had felt was from Israeli soldiers.

Except for the taxi ride to Tikva's apartment, joining the Women in Black vigil on my previous trip, or my brief lunch at the Moroccan restaurant, I spent little time on the streets of West Jerusalem. Yvonne and I made a date to meet and, after consulting a map, I decided to walk to her house. Since I had interviewed her in January after a Women in Black vigil, we had kept in touch, and I looked forward to seeing her again.

Yvonne Deutsch is a much younger activist than Tikva, but like her, Yvonne has formed alliances with Palestinians. Ten years earlier she became involved with the "Committee in Solidarity with Bir Zeit," a group that tried to assist the beleaguered university in the West Bank. From our first meeting I was aware how her social-work training made Yvonne more sensitive to the psychology of the political situation. She worries, for instance, about the siege mentality of so much of the Israeli population. Her own sense of not quite belonging, of being a transplant (she emigrated to Israel from Rumania twenty-eight years ago at the age of eight), makes it easier for her to envision an Israel squarely integrated into the culture and politics of the Middle East, she told me. Indeed, she is convinced that is the only viable alternative.

Both Yvonne and her long-time American-born partner, who emigrated to Israel in 1978 and who now serves as a lawyer for Palestinians, have paid for their activism. She has been hounded by anonymous obscene calls that she believes were coming from Meir Kahane supporters.[2] The couple lives

2. Kahane, born in Brooklyn, founded the Jewish Defense League in the United States. An organization known for its violent attacks on Arabs and on progressive Jews, it is believed to be behind the assassination of Alex Odeh, the Orange County (California) head of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee. After Kahane's emigration to Israel he founded the Kach movement, which espouses expulsion of Arabs from all of Palestine. With the danger of Kach winning enough seats in the Knesset to hold the balance of power, it was outlawed in 1988 on the grounds that it was racist and antidemocratic.

in a very different kind of neighborhood from Tikva's, on a narrow street with small, low buildings. Surrounded mostly by very conservative Sephardim ("Oriental" Jews) neighbors, the couple have been subjected to constant harassment. Trash has been thrown at their car and men have urinated against their wooden outer gate. Since this was the only area where they could afford to live, they have put up with these insults and assaults and have been trying to create a pleasant living space for themselves, renovating the house extensively.

When we first met in early January 1989, I was still reeling from the previous day's teargassing in East Jerusalem. The full weight of all I had observed and experienced for ten days had enraged me, and Yvonne had warned me not to act out of anger. This advice was probably the social worker in her coming out. Yvonne herself was not angry then. Rather, she seemed resigned, even depressed. Six months later, she was less downcast, attributing her mood change to quitting her job. She admitted, however, that it was getting harder and harder to deal with the combination of alienation and anger that she also felt. Since she had recently attended a conference on the effects of the *intifada* on children, these feelings were especially fresh. It was not that she learned anything new; it was just that the testimony she heard made the suffering more tangible.

Yvonne's ease in coordinating the weekly vigils of Women in Black had disappeared. As more and more women joined, the early camaraderie was lost, and more problematic political differences had begun to surface. There was still the feminist commitment to talk these through, but the strain was taking its toll, particularly with the increased harassment they were experiencing. The supporters of Meir Kahane, for instance, had now mounted a counterdemonstration. Women in White stood on the opposite corner with a huge Israeli flag. Their appearance spurred a discussion among Women in Black about flying the flag, a debate that was similar to the one held by American peace groups during the Vietnam war. Some women felt that the group should display the flag during their weekly vigil; others disagreed, asking: "Do we really want to stand behind the flag?" They eventually decided against it.

When one of their male supporters boarded a bus and took pictures of the Jewish Israeli children who had been throwing stones at them, the group again faced a major dilemma. Should they go to the police with the pictures? Not liking the idea of using the force of the state, the women first thought about going to the children's school and trying to talk with them directly. Ultimately, remembering that Palestinian children pay the price for throwing stones, they decided to go to the police. Predictably, the children were not punished.

Despite the emerging differences in the group, Yvonne was enthusiastic in the summer of 1989 about the formation of a coalition of women's peace groups. In the forefront of the peace movement, Israeli women increasingly were making connections between the militarism that defined Israeli society and their own subordinate position.

Women like Tikva and Yvonne, and Rayna Moss, whom I first met in Tel Aviv before my flight home, are at the forefront of the Israeli peace movement.[3] They are the most visible representatives among almost all the peace groups, with the exception of Yesh Gvul, the men who refuse to do their military service in the Occupied Territories. Meeting people like these women, who actually were out ahead of the mainstream peace movement, made it easier for me to make an occasional side trip into West Jerusalem.

The rage toward Israelis that had consumed me during my first trip had been replaced by a profound sense of alienation. I was overwhelmed by this feeling one day when I stopped for lunch at a seafood restaurant on my way back from Yvonne's. The basement eatery looked like an American restaurant, and I heard as much English as Hebrew. Judging from their accents, there seemed to be a lot of Jewish American tourists patronizing it. It should have felt familiar and I should have been comfortable. Instead, their laughter and frivolity—which I interpreted as a complete lack of concern about the occupation—began to get on my nerves. As I looked around at the crowd, most had the same light complexions and hair as I, people whose ancestry was probably also traced to Russia and Lithuania. But I felt so alien.

Nor could I identify with the Israelis who lounged in the outdoor cafes eating ice cream, apparently indifferent to the Palestinians who lived such a short distance away. But I began to wonder how many among them might be Tikva Parnasses or Yvonne Deutsches or members of Yesh Gvul. Whenever I entertained that possibility, my spirits were lifted, at least momentarily. Perhaps the *intifada,* on the one hand, and the activism inside the Green Line, on the other, *could* change the course of history. That is the spirit, I suppose, in which thousands of Israelis, Palestinians, Europeans, and Americans came together to join hands for peace in the closing days of 1989.

3. Although I had met Rayna for the first time in June 1989, it was not until two years later, when I stayed with her before my plane departure, that I learned more about her.

DECEMBER 27, 1989, TO JANUARY 24, 1990

Winter 1990

In the course of the year after I first traveled to Palestine, my initial somewhat naive curiosity was transformed into a more critical approach. The many faces of the *intifada* that I saw during my second trip revealed a society in flux, with all the inherent conflicts that such changes produce. Lurking behind the united opposition to Israeli occupation were differences that have important implications for the future.

My earlier outrage at Israelis had turned into alienation and a profound sense that I had been betrayed as a Jew by those who claimed to speak and act in my name. Far from denying my own Jewish identity, I felt compelled instead to redeem my notion of what it meant to be a Jew; to prove that there was still a Jewish soul, a commitment to justice. The evidence of this that I found among some Israelis bolstered my spirits.

My support for the Palestinian cause was undiminished, but I was eager to become more systematic in observing what was happening in Palestine. I still had a lot of unanswered questions, especially about the women's movement. I had operated pretty much on a hit-or-miss basis during my first two trips, and although I had digested a great deal, I still did not have a grasp of the way grass-roots activist women were experiencing and engineering change. To explore that question, I felt that I had to spend time in a single village where the different women's committees all had a presence. Kufr Nameh was the obvious choice.

Friends in the United States and in Palestine encouraged me once again. What held me back, as I contemplated a return trip during my winter break, was the memory of how bitterly cold the houses were. Even though

I could stay at Kathy's apartment, I hoped to spend days at a stretch in the village. But my reservations were swept aside as soon as I heard about the international peace demonstrations that were planned for year's end in Jerusalem. Almost one year to the day after my first arrival, I landed at Ben Gurion Airport.

Although I intended to start my own work as soon as the major demonstrations ended, earlier trips had taught me to live with the frustration of delays, to be flexible when carefully laid plans went awry. The activists on whom I depended to act as my guides and translators were all going to be engaged for a full week in hosting the more than one thousand international visitors. So I settled in for a ten-day "detour." Finding things to do was no problem. I attended many of the workshops that were offered daily, wandered around in the Old City—which was jumping as a result of the infusion of tourists—and occasionally linked up with a U.S. student group on their "political tours." As a result, the month I spent in Palestine opened my eyes to new issues, including the plight of the Palestinians inside Green Line Israel.

The Politics of Hope

The International Peace Initiative, 1990 consisted of a series of events, demonstrations, and workshops planned jointly by a team of Israelis, Palestinians, and Europeans. The idea for it grew out of a discussion at the Eighth European Nuclear Disarmament Convention in July 1989. The first major event planned was a women's march from West to East Jerusalem on December 29, following a morning conference and a Women in Black vigil in West Jerusalem. The major billing of the week-long program was given to the Hands across Jerusalem gathering the following day.

As soon as I landed at Ben Gurion Airport I sensed that the mood was more strained than it had been in June. The immigration clerk was very brusque and completely ignored my request not to stamp my passport. I could find a *servis* to West Jerusalem, but none would take me across the unmarked dividing line of that "unified city" to Arab East Jerusalem. Instead, I was dropped off at a busy taxi stand outside West Jerusalem. On the fifth try I found a driver willing to take me to the National Palace Hotel. When we pulled up outside, however, he demanded an outrageous fee. Instead of being on good behavior for the hundreds of Europeans and other foreigners who were flocking to East Jerusalem to participate in the International Peace Initiative, the Israelis I encountered on my arrival were hostile and unhelpful.

I was relieved to reach the National Palace Hotel, my home base, but was overwhelmed by the absolute mob that was milling around—mainly Italians, whose cigarette smoke and exuberant conversations filled the

lounge. Ibrahim, the health committee worker who had been such a help the previous summer, spotted me immediately and led me over to where a small group was chatting. Those I knew greeted me warmly, and from across the room Ghada, the committee member who first introduced me to Kufr Nameh, smiled and waved. Many other activists I had met previously sat huddling with the international visitors throughout the room.

It looked as if every Palestinian political group was present, and practically every Jerusalem and Ramallah activist. The din was almost deafening as they competed for the hearts and minds of the foreign participants. Despite their unity in opposing the Israelis, the political parties frequently differed. In this instance some were highly critical of the limited platform the Palestinians had worked out with the Israeli peace activists—particularly the agreement not to display the Palestinian flag.

The next evening at the opening ceremony for the International Initiative their disagreement was played out quietly on the platform after someone tacked a Palestinian flag to the backdrop curtain. Faisal Husseini, one of the Palestinian leaders in the West Bank, had been a party to the agreement and insisted that the flag be removed. When the others on the platform refused, he was forced to remove it himself. With that settled, he and Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi launched the East Jerusalem events. Palestinians, Israelis, and Europeans shared the platform, almost as many women as men among them.

Few Americans arrived in time for the opening ceremony, but we did eventually number almost one hundred. Scattered throughout the city, we managed to gather about two dozen of us the second evening, and we resolved that though greatly outnumbered by the Europeans, we would try to make our presence known. The women decided that we would form an American contingent in the Women's March the next day.

The Women's Gatherings for Peace

Tears streamed down my face and I felt a lump forming in my throat when our march of women was greeted by a long line of clapping Palestinians as we crossed into East Jerusalem. Standing behind the police-erected barricades, block after block of young and old hailed us, their arms either raised in the ubiquitous "V" signal or reaching out to clasp our hands as we passed.

The international gathering of women had started the day at the Women Go for Peace conference at the Knesset Tower Hotel in West Jerusalem, listening to the speeches of both Jewish and Arab Israelis, Italians, and Americans. The atmosphere at the conference was exhilarat-

ing, and women embraced, laughed, and chatted with each other in many different languages. The courtyard outside was lined with tables, where the Israeli women dispensed literature about their organizations and sold T-shirts, buttons, and posters. Inside, the large room was packed with women, eyes fixed on the platform as we listened to the Hebrew, English, Arabic, and Italian translations through our headsets, nodding in agreement with the speakers and clapping wildly. It was hard not to be caught up in the belief that, together, we women of the world could stem the tide of violence in this troubled region. In some ways, it all felt familiar, like a women's gathering in Los Angeles, where I would expect to know and recognize many women.

A similar women's conference had been held in West Jerusalem the previous year, but with all the international visitors drawn to the series of peace events, this one was at least four times as large. The ranks of women continued to grow as the morning progressed and the conference crowd moved to Paris Square, the site of the regular Friday vigil of Women in Black. This was the second time I had stood with the women on that little strip of land they held for one hour every Friday. But on this occasion, at year's end 1989, instead of the usual eighty people to which the vigil had by then grown, the number swelled to over two thousand.

There was not enough space on the little triangular island to accommodate everyone, and hundreds spilled onto the sidewalks across the streets. There were so many women that the two Meir Kahane supporters who regularly counterdemonstrated did not have the nerve to show their faces. For once the women standing there would not have to contend with these men spewing obscenities. The noise of the crowd also drowned out the taunts of the men driving by, and the buses so often filled with young children making ugly faces were rerouted. On this day, Paris Square belonged to the peacemakers, women from all over the world dressed in black, holding signs in Hebrew, Arabic, and English: End the Occupation.

As the line of two thousand black-clad women formed for the march into East Jerusalem, many more appeared from every direction. Our line grew longer and swelled to more than six thousand, and our spirits soared. Neither the mounted police, nor the soldiers on the rooftops along our route, nor the looming water cannons that followed us could dampen them. And when we caught sight of the crowds of Palestinians waiting to greet us, it seemed as if anything was possible—even peace. For a moment we forgot that we were on the streets of East Jerusalem where the Israeli occupiers controlled what was possible.

Eight blocks later, as we made our way down Saladin Street to El Hakawate Theatre (now known as al-Masrah), where members of the

Palestinian women's committees were waiting for us, I choked up again. But the tears that flowed this time were from the stinging effects of the tear gas. Rushing to the head of the march to photograph our arrival, I was overcome by the tear gas that had just been lobbed at the women down below in the courtyard of the theater.

The fumes were too thick to continue, and the march came to a halt, the women milling around in confusion, those at the front coughing and gasping for breath. As the air began to clear, I went around the front of the line and headed for the next block, where there was another entrance. My friend Assia had the same idea, and together we made our way, covering our mouths and noses with handkerchiefs. The courtyard of the theater was still a mass of confusion, with children coughing and crying and women shouting with rage. Maha Nassar, one of the leaders of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, whom I had interviewed the previous year, and with whom I had renewed my acquaintance the previous day, was holding her leg where she had been struck repeatedly with a baton. Apparently, when the Palestinian women had raised their flag in a gesture of welcome to the territory they claimed as theirs, the soldiers and police who had been monitoring our march responded with a tear gas attack on them. They also beat the women as they wrenched the flag from their hands. We were told that a Palestinian-American psychologist from Bir Zeit University and his wife and daughter, along with over a dozen others, had all been carted off to prison.

Momentarily thrown off guard, as the tear gas smoke finally dissipated, we regained our bearings and filed into the auditorium to join the Palestinian women who had been bused in from towns, villages, and refugee camps in the West Bank. They had come to make a statement for freedom in their own independent state, a statement boldly enunciated in the large Arabic banner across the back of the stage in East Jerusalem, which read: "There is no choice but to struggle for the convening of an international peace conference; it is the quickest path to self-determination, return, and an independent Palestinian state on our beloved land." Two smaller signs adorned the platform, a French call for "Liberation of Palestinian Prisoners" and a sign in German proclaiming its name, "Organization for Freedom and Justice." All these slogans contrasted sharply with the rather vague "Women Go for Peace" theme that had been emblazoned on the platform at the West Jerusalem conference.

The East Jerusalem event began with an enthusiastic rendition of "Billadi" (homeland), the Palestinian national anthem, followed by the ululation of the older women and a spontaneous eruption of nationalist chants from the younger ones. After hearing a welcome in Arabic and an

English statement on freedom and dignity, the crowd stood for one minute in silent remembrance of the Palestinian victims of the *intifada.*

Many of the Israeli women who sat in the audience at El Hakawate looked ill at ease, shifting in their seats, uncertain whether they should stand, whether they should clap. As it was, not many had joined the crowd in the theater. While there were limited seats, and it was more appropriate to hold these for the Palestinian women, the quick retreat many Israeli women had made to West Jerusalem was a sign, too, of how profoundly discomfited most Israelis were by the specter of Palestinian nationalism.

While the line of marching women had crossed the invisible physical boundary between East and West Jerusalem, it seemed harder to cross other boundaries, especially those deeply embedded in the psyche through decades of fear, mistrust, and rhetoric. It is undoubtedly easier for us outsiders, removed as we are from the societal fears and the history of conflict, to support both the Israeli women in their defiance of their government and their call for peace and the plea of the Palestinians for the recognition of their legitimate rights, including the right to an independent state.

Hands across Jerusalem

Despite the sour note on which the women's march had ended, people were looking forward to the Hands across Jerusalem demonstration scheduled for 2:00 P.M. that day. It was a first: thousands of people coming together, linking hands to encircle the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem with a human chain. The Israeli authorities tried to thwart Palestinian participation by setting up roadblocks on the main highway from the eastern West Bank. But the peacemakers prevailed and more than thirty thousand people gathered, including some Palestinians who walked from the checkpoint outside East Jerusalem, almost ten kilometers away.

Returning from a morning visit to Deheisheh Refugee Camp, I was astonished to see thousands of people already lining the sidewalk along the ancient stone walls. Many were holding olive branches; yellow balloons were afloat, and music was blaring from some unseen source near the top of the hill on the West Jerusalem side. The mood was reminiscent of the 1967 anti-Vietnam war demonstrations in San Francisco, a blend of "love-in" and protest.

As our van weaved through the mounted police down the hill from West Jerusalem, I could see the crowd of demonstrators stretching past Damascus Gate, the main entrance to the Old City in East Jerusalem. There was a festive atmosphere among the largely Israeli assemblage toward the top of

the hill and along the curve extending into West Jerusalem. The police stationed up there seemed friendly, though reserved. Walking down the line of demonstrators further into Arab East Jerusalem, I noticed how different the mood was. The numerous mounted police, together with the Border Guards, were positioned in ready formation, batons in hand, in front of the mainly Palestinian and international demonstrators—many of whom draped black and white *kuffiyahs* over their shoulders. The demonstrators tried to ignore the water cannons visible in the distance and to project an air of optimism. But the smiles people flashed as I stopped to photograph them were not enough to dispel the more somber atmosphere that hung over the predominantly Palestinian links of the chain.

Gone was the defiance that the Palestinian women had displayed at El Hakawate Theatre the previous day. There were no chants or songs, or even youthful boisterousness, except for one cluster of young women and men who were gathered in a circle, singing. But they, too, were wary, in contrast to the unabashed vitality of most of the Israelis and the foreigners. Caught up again in the feeling that history was being made, I threw my own usual caution to the wind and started to photograph the singing and chanting youth. I was brought up short, though, when one of the young men in the circle of singers placed his hand in front of my camera lens and made a motion as if to ask: "Are you crazy? What do you think you're doing? Do you want us to get arrested?"

The mood of optimism fed by the unexpectedly large turnout quickly turned to disappointment as more mounted police pulled into position and soldiers began to bark orders to disperse. It was only 2:45, fifteen minutes before the event was scheduled to end. Later, claims were made that some young Palestinians near Herod's Gate were chanting nationalist slogans, though I was standing not far from there and heard nothing. Because of the ugly mood of the "guardians of security," the organizers came around and urged people to comply with the order to disperse.

In confusion, the crowd began to break up, and I sensed impending danger as I crossed the street. The Border Guards were slapping their batons against their legs, the mounted police were beginning to gallop off in various directions, and the water cannons were pulled into place. Confused by this massive show of force, I stood with others and watched, nervously awaiting the inevitable assault.

When I saw a cluster of police run down the street after some young men, along with other camera-laden foreigners, I followed them. From a safe distance, running past Schmidt's Girl School, I managed to capture on film some of their attacks on the fleeing young people. My face pressed to the camera's viewfinder, I was oblivious to what was happening behind me

until a stranger grabbed my arm and pulled me off to the side. No sooner had we mounted the curb, than a charge of mounted police came by, wielding their batons.

Before I could make my way out of the street, I saw the water cannons coming toward us. Banging on the gate of the school to no avail, a group of us cowered together in a corner of the driveway entrance. Our position spared us the full burst of green-dyed water (used to disperse people, but also to leave a mark for the police to identify participants). Another water cannon came from the opposite direction as I was trying to flee the scene, so I pressed with a throng into the doorway of a building and up the stairs, once again escaping a thorough dousing of cold water. Palestinians later assured me that the cold water was preferable to the hot water usually used.

Dampened and still trembling from a combination of fear, anger, and disbelief, I made my way back to the National Hotel, the headquarters for the international gathering. The lobby and large lounge were filled with coughing and crying people, and the floors were covered with onion skins. The odor of tear gas still hung in the air. Soldiers, ostensibly in pursuit of some youths, had lobbed tear gas canisters through the window into the lounge where hundreds of Italians were gathered.

As more people straggled back to the hotel, some dripping green water, others coughing from the effects of tear gas, we learned of the casualties: an Italian woman sitting in the lobby of one of the other hotels had lost her eye as a result of flying shards from a plate-glass window shattered by the force of the water cannons; an Israeli couple, standing in the Damascus Gate area, had been injured by rubber bullets, and hundreds of people were beaten, teargassed, and drenched by water cannons.

The international press captured these events on film, and the attacks on the gathering of peacemakers were broadcast around the world. Injuries to Palestinians undoubtedly would have been ignored by the Israeli public, but an uproar ensued after an injured Israeli couple went on television to recount their experience. Despite police denials of wrongdoing, there was enough video footage to prove the claims of the organizers. Whether or not this assault had been planned in advance, as charged, the Israeli authorities had made their point: do not cross the boundary between occupied and occupier; do not harbor the illusion of hope.

Jerusalem: Pages from a Notebook, IV

For probably the first time since the beginning of the *intifada,* the streets of Jerusalem at year's end were filled with tourists, and the local shopkeepers were happy. The large crowd of international visitors drew many merchants to the outside steps of the National Palace in the evening, and they laid their wares on the ground. The sales of *kuffiyahs* were brisk. Since I am a devotee of Bedouin and ethnic jewelry—Marvin puts it less kindly and calls me a "jewelry freak"—my interests lay in the necklaces, and I bargained for an old amber and seed one.

Having to put my own plan on hold until most of the international visitors left, I spent most of my time during the week with a delegation of a dozen American students, a group that included a student from my own campus. The evening after the large Hands across Jerusalem demonstration, I led the group over to the Philadelphia, the hidden, subterranean restaurant I had discovered the previous New Year's Day. Sure enough, it was open, and we took over a large table. One of the staff at the restaurant recognized some of us from the demonstration and rushed over to greet us. In a show of appreciation for our support, he brought us two bottles of wine and, as we discovered when it came time to pay, heavily discounted our dinner bill.

I was not planning to settle in at Kathy's again until the ten-day program of events was over, but since every hotel was jammed, after my first two nights at the National Palace, I moved in temporarily to the house where

my friend Rifaat's mother lived behind the family's hotel. That is where I spent New Year's Eve, my second consecutive one in Occupied Palestine. Still suffering from the effects of the tear gas attacks that I had experienced only peripherally, my resistance was lowered and I could not manage to stay awake for the witching hour. *"Cinque, quattro, tre, due, uno,"* I heard in my semiwakeful state, as the Italians in the National Palace lounge next door did their countdown to the New Year.

The weather was unseasonably warm and sunny, and whenever I had a chance, between appointments, workshops, and trips with the students to the West Bank, I stole away for an hour or two into the Old City, a couple of blocks away. The shops were closed after noontime in honor of the daily commercial strike, but there were always people around. Sometimes the shopkeepers were still inside, behind their shuttered doors. Occasionally they invited me in for coffee and a visit, eager to break the monotony of their afternoon—and hopeful, no doubt, that I might make a purchase and help their crippled business.

Aware of the reason for the massive influx of foreigners, they were also eager to talk politics. Whenever they discovered I was an American, they were particularly curious. One young shopkeeper with whom I visited had heard about the demonstration outside of the American Consulate that close to fifty of us Americans had held at the end of the international events.[1] That was a start, he thought, as he pleaded with me to try to do something about the unquestioned American support of Israel. "Don't they know what is being done to us?" he beseeched.

1. A group of about ten of us, primarily students, had spontaneously decided to hold a demonstration focused on the use of U.S. tax dollars to support Israel's continued violation of human rights. The fifty demonstrators included members of the various U.S. delegations who were in Palestine at the time, as well as several Palestinians who held U.S. passports. The demonstration was widely covered in the Palestinian press, with a front-page photo and story appearing in *Al-Quds* Arabic daily.

Inside the Green Line: Palestinians without Hope

Over the course of the twenty months following the UN resolution partitioning Palestine in November 1947, and as a result of the ensuing war, approximately 800,000 Palestinians fled from the territory that became the Jewish state, leaving a resident Palestinian population of only 150,000. Today the Palestinian population of Israel numbers approximately 750,000, or about 12.5 percent of the worldwide Palestinian population. Most are concentrated in the urban areas of Haifa, Acre, and Jaffa, and in the hill towns of the Sea of Galilee and the region known as the Triangle.

The area of Lydda-Ramleh was almost entirely Palestinian at the time of the UN Partition Resolution, with a resident population of 35,000–55,000 people. In July 1948 most were either deliberately expelled or fled in fear following the massacre of 250 people in Lydda. Today, pockets of Palestinians, largely landless, remain in the area, which the Israelis now call Lod.[1]

The monthly commemoration of the start of the *intifada,* January 9, 1990, was a miserably cold and rainy day. East Jerusalem was quiet, the mufflers and horns of the taxis, *servises,* and buses silenced in observation of a general strike. Except for the bakery, where we could find some hot, fresh pita to substitute for the white bread that was served for breakfast at the

1. The figures and information on refugees, especially on those from the Lydda-Ramleh area, come mainly from Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Current population estimates are based on UNRWA data.

hotel where I was staying with the students, a few designated pharmacies were the only stores open.

It was hard to accomplish much on these general strike days, so I decided to join the students one last time. They were scheduled to go into Green Line Israel. I had driven through Umm al-Fahm with Kathy, but the only hint I had had of the situation of the Palestinians inside Israel was from observing the East Jerusalem taxi driver who had driven me to Tel Aviv in June 1989. As he had wandered aimlessly, searching for the off-the-beaten-path French hotel where I was planning to stay the night, he had become very agitated and his eyes had filled with terror when he finally had had to stop and ask an Israeli for directions.

I had no idea what was in store for us inside the Green Line that day, but I was thankful to get into a heated bus. It would have been asking for trouble to travel with West Bank license plates, so the funky Palestinian bus that had been transporting the student delegation had been replaced by a shiny, large Israeli tour bus. After driving through West Jerusalem, we headed toward Tel Aviv. But instead of continuing on, we turned off toward Lod, a town of almost sixty thousand, one-fifth of whom are Palestinian.

The only image most people have of Lod is of the Ben Gurion Airport on its outskirts. I had other images: pictures conjured up by the long, painful tale of the flight from Lydda, as the Palestinians had called it, told to me almost exactly one year before by Father Odeh Rintissi of the Episcopalian Boys School in Ramallah. When he was eleven years old, in 1948, he was among the tens of thousands of Palestinians who were driven from their homes in Ramleh and Lydda by the Haganah and other military units. Believing that they would be able to return, as they had after the British had evacuated them in 1936, people had simply locked their doors and left their belongings behind. It had taken a full day to get out of Lydda, and the first night they had slept outside the town in the mountains, gathering sticks to make a fire. They had been fearful of being bombed, Father Rintissi explained, just as they had been earlier during the mid-May air raids. So they had extinguished the flames whenever planes were heard overhead. With few belongings and rations, the group had continued their long march until they reached Ramallah two days later. By then hundreds had died along the way.[2] The citizens of Ramallah had provided food and clothing for those who had made it there, and they had set up a tent city.

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2. Father Rintissi placed the figure at more than 1,000, but others, like Benny Morris, estimate that a minimum of 335 had died. This is in addition to the 250 who had been killed in the original massacre in Lydda.

Father Rintissi was a survivor of that long march; a survivor of Lydda. So, too, were those who had stayed behind and eventually had become citizens of Israel, the so-called Israeli Arabs. But many of the Palestinian Israelis whom we met that day in Lod were survivors only in the most literal sense. They were not dead, but their spirits were.

Luwahez, a local Palestinian woman activist, led us through a "community" where many lived: a muddy, foul-smelling squatters' camp. I was struck by both the similarities and differences between their conditions and those in the refugee camps in Gaza and the West Bank—places where many of their relatives who fled in 1948 probably still live. Although these Palestinians had stayed behind, the Israelis had forced them out of their living quarters in what had been Lydda, and they were reduced to living in this squatters' camp. There was a listlessness, a despair, a feeling of being forgotten. The anger at not being treated like human beings—a refrain I heard repeatedly from those in the refugee camps, too—had turned into impotent rage. When they looked out across the horizon, they remembered the land that had been theirs. In the place of their homes and fields and villages they saw brand new Israeli apartment blocks from which they were excluded. They lived across the road in abject poverty, without water, without clinics, without dignity—and without hope.

We entered one of the first houses we came to. The floors were covered with scraps of food, clothes, and dirt, in contrast to the spic-and-span condition of even the most miserable, cracker-box homes in Jabalya and the other refugee camps I had visited. Like many dispirited mothers in urban ghettos and barrios of the United States, the woman whose house this was had given up on trying to fight the dirt, the rats, and the squalor. She was resigned to living from day to day, not to expect more, to being ignored by the Israelis and forgotten by the Palestinians outside. Even the usual hospitality offered in the most humble Palestinian home was absent. There was not enough money for tea, or juice, or coffee to be offered to visitors. There were no extra glasses. Besides, there was no running water.

As we were leaving her house, the woman squatter accompanied us to the muddy front yard, beseeching: "Don't forget the Palestinians inside Israel. Write about us in the newspaper." In spite of her despair, she held onto her Palestinian identity, refusing to accept the official designation of Israeli Arab. "I cannot feel that I am an Israeli," she told us. "We don't have the same rights. The Israelis are not our representatives, and we want a solution for us." As we left the yard of her leaking, ramshackle house, she called after us, pointing: "Go see one of the girls there. The rats, they ate her eye."

We slogged through the foul-smelling mire that served both as a drainage ditch and as a sidewalk and stopped at a few other houses. Reading about the reduced budget for services for Israeli Arabs in contrast to the Jewish population was one thing. Seeing the results was quite another.

It was not their poverty or their anger that surprised me so much. These were not new to me, but the overwhelming mood of defeat was. It contrasted so starkly with everything I had seen and heard in the West Bank and Gaza. There, people were defiant and determined and charting a new course. The *intifada* had invigorated them.

When we had first met with Luwahez in her small, neat house on the margins of the squatters' camp in Lod, she had warned us about the abysmal conditions. She had also told us how widespread were drugs and prostitution, an almost unheard-of phenomenon in the Occupied Territories since the beginning of the *intifada.* It was only her vision that kept her from getting discouraged in the face of such misery and resignation. Perhaps it was also her own prison experiences and the fact that she was of the same generation and background as those who were fueling the *intifada.*

Born and raised in Jerusalem, Luwahez was only seven years old in 1967, at the time of the six-day war. Stripped of the family's previous material comforts, Luwahez had been brought up on a diet of stories told by her father, who had become a worker in Israel. She remembered going out as a youngster for the first time after the bombing in 1967 and seeing the Israeli soldiers smiling and laughing. Those events had shaped her life, she told us.

In 1972, when she was only twelve years old, she had been arrested and detained for one week for participating in a demonstration to protest the deportation of eight Palestinians. After her release she had joined one of the Palestinian political organizations, an act that had earned her a four-year prison term in 1975. Spending her late teen years in prison, subjected to torture—which has left deep, unsightly scars on her breast and her leg—she had used the time to learn about herself, to study foreign languages, and to engage in political discussion.

Five years ago Luwahez married a Palestinian from inside the Green Line and moved to what is now Lod. Initially she found the situation difficult, until she figured out a role for herself. With other young women in the area, all university graduates with connections to the West Bank and Gaza, Luwahez founded the Arab Women's Committee. It was the first time many of these local Palestinian women had become involved in any kind of

organized self-help venture, and they responded eagerly to the establishment of a kindergarten. The Israeli authorities closed it down on the charge that Ghassan Kanafani, for whom it was named, was a terrorist. The women argued, "If Ghassan Kanafani is a terrorist, why are you teaching your students at Hebrew University about Ghassan Kanafani as a Palestinian writer?"

The women had expanded their work and taken their experiences to other Arab towns and communities inside Israel. "Slowly, slowly," Luwahez told us, "they managed to wake the sleeping giant, the so-called Arab Israelis in Lod, especially the women." But it had been the *intifada* that really galvanized them:

> What happened during the *intifada,* for the first time, after forty years of Israeli statehood, the Arabs here started to see that really they are Palestinian; that this was the moment to go to the streets, to say:
> "We are Palestinian."
> In Lod, in Jaffa, the first week after the *intifada* began, about three hundred women and men went to the street without any license, without any permission from the authorities.
> Really, the situation has changed since the *intifada.* We have a political movement, especially our women's committee. And since the *intifada,* about five hundred persons are in jail because they put up a Palestinian flag and slogans.

Despite her excitement about the new developments, about the demonstrations, about the Arab Women's Committee she had helped to start, and about the popular committees that gathered food and money and clothing for those in the West Bank and Gaza, there was still that wistfulness about being forgotten:

> All the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza are saying they want a separate Palestinian state.
> But what about us? What about the situation of the 700,000 who are living here?

Indeed, this visit to Lod was the first time that I had given much thought to the three-quarters of a million Palestinians living inside Green Line Israel.

In spite of Luwahez's charisma and vitality, it was difficult to shake the depression that had overtaken the group after the visit to the squatters' camp. The brief tour of the ruins of the remaining Arab quarter of Jaffa only added to our feeling of despair. It was not until we reached Umm al-Fahm that we lightened up a bit, though like the students I remained pensive the rest of the day.

Unlike Lod, where the twelve thousand Palestinian inhabitants were governed—or, more aptly, ignored—by the Israeli municipal authorities, the Palestinian hilltop town of Umm al-Fahm is self-governed. Few of the

residents from the area fled in 1948, because under the UN Partition Resolution their area had been designated part of the Arab state. Before the founding of Israel most of the people lived and worked the 146,000 *dunums* (36,000 acres) that extended from Meggido to Umm al-Fahm, where many of them summered. When Meggido was converted into two kibbutzim, the Palestinian farmers lost almost one-fourth of their lands. Four years later, in 1952, under the agreement that King Abdullah of Jordan signed with Israeli prime minister Golda Meir, the local Palestinians found their lands reduced to 13,000 *dunums* (3,250 acres), or 2.5 percent of their original acreage.

When more of their land was confiscated for the founding of two more kibbutzim (named, ironically, "the water of my people") in the mid-sixties, they were squeezed into the hilltop town with no room to expand. Without enough land to farm, most of the residents of Umm al-Fahm now work in Israeli towns, traveling as much as three hours daily to work in Tel Aviv. Like other Palestinian municipalities and neighborhoods, the budget of Umm al-Fahm is only one-fourth of what is allotted per capita to Jewish municipalities. The government social services and schools are inadequate, and this town of twenty-seven thousand people has no hospital or public clinic.

Yusef, a lawyer with the al-Hadaf Educational and Cultural Foundation, like Luwahez, was discouraged both by the discriminatory treatment of the Arabs and by their lethargy. After a long and ineffective reign by the Communist party, during which the conditions in Umm al-Fahm only worsened, he told us, the Islamic movement swept the 1988 election. Capitalizing on the despondency of the people and promising improved services and conditions, they had won thirteen of the sixteen seats on the town council. However, he complained, "a full year after their victory, they've done little to change the situation—except to try to impose strict Islamic practices, including restricting the movement of women."

Nonprofit educational and cultural groups like al-Hadaf were providing a secular alternative, both to the municipal services and to those offered by the Islamic movement, which at the time of our visit was building a large Islamic cultural center. Al-Hadaf had established its own cultural center and library as well as a kindergarten. The center, spread over several rooms in the upper story of an apartment building, was buzzing with the activity of students of all ages engaged in drama workshops, art classes and sewing projects. The large library, located in a separate building, had a magnificent, sweeping view of the countryside and of the town. It seemed to serve both as an intellectual resource and as a social space for young people. While quite a few children were bent intently over their books, the older

youths were engaged in whispered conversation. In some ways it seemed very much like the West Bank: the local Palestinians were creating their own institutions.

Fighting a long uphill battle, intellectuals like Yusef believed that the *intifada* in Occupied Palestine also created an opportunity for Palestinians inside Israel. He felt that the time was ripe to unite and confront their discrimination.[3]

Perhaps because we were eager for a lift, a ray of hope, we gladly spent several hours in Umm al-Fahm, depriving ourselves, however, of a visit to Nazareth, another Arab-run municipality. It was almost dark by the time we left, and the long ride through the Jordan valley added to our exhaustion.

Just as I was beginning to doze, I was awakened as the bus lurched to a halt. We had crossed the Green Line and were entering the Jordan Valley in the Occupied West Bank. Ahead of us was one of the few remaining refugee camps in the Jordan Valley, and the soldiers stationed at the checkpoint insisted that they accompany us in a convoy past the camp. Because of the yellow Israeli plates, they assumed we were an Israeli-sponsored group and would welcome their "protection."

As the elder, authority figure on the bus, I put on my professorial hat, dismounted, and went over to where the driver was talking with the soldiers. I explained that I was leading a group of American students and that we were on our way back to Jerusalem. I informed them politely that we did not want their jeeps to accompany us. I was worried: it was bad enough to be traveling in the West Bank with Israeli license plates—particularly on a general strike day, when vehicles with blue West Bank plates are also stoned. Traveling in the company of Israeli jeeps would only make matters worse.

I tried to explain my concern and pointed out that their presence would, in fact, jeopardize us. Smirking, they asked me: "Is it for ideological or pragmatic reasons that you don't want us to accompany you?" I hastened to assure them that it was only for pragmatic reasons, and I hated myself for holding back the tongue-lashing I wanted to give them, feeling the same kind of cowardly shame that I had felt when I had lied to the bullies who had grabbed my books and asked if I was Jewish. During this exchange with the soldiers, the officer in charge of the area pulled up, and after I explained the problem, he assured me very nicely that he would accommodate our wishes. Flushed with victory, I reboarded the bus along with the

3. In fact, the opposite has happened. In the Israeli elections of 1992 the Arab parties could not agree on a unified platform, and ran on three separate lists.

driver, who was still tremulous, and light-heartedly told those who were awake what had happened. Our laughter was cut short, however, when we discovered that the officer had lied to me. He had pulled his jeep up ahead of us and forced the bus to inch along past the camp, all the while shining the floodlights of the jeep directly into the recesses of the camp. It was almost as if they were trying to instigate an incident. We all held our breaths, valiantly hoping they would not succeed in provoking a stone-throwing barrage from inside, that we would not be responsible for any shooting.

After several tense minutes, the jeep made a U-turn in front of us and returned to its post. We all sighed with relief, though we were concerned about still having to pass through Jericho with Israeli plates. By the time we reached there the town was asleep, and we managed to return to Jerusalem with no further incidents.

It is still difficult for me to write about the people on the outskirts of Lod whose shanties one flies over when taking off from Ben Gurion Airport, the residents of Lydda who stayed, only to be forgotten; and about the Palestinians inside the Green Line, who might now have to fight for their very right to be there—again. Ariel Sharon, the former minister of housing, in December 1990 announced plans to proceed with the "Judaization" of the Galilee and the Triangle areas of northern Israel. The phrase itself, with its frightening parallels to the Nazi "Aryanization" campaign to rid Germany of its Jewish population, rekindles my feelings of shame at what Jews are doing.

In addition to drowning the long-term Palestinian residents of the area in a sea of newly transplanted Jews, the plan to create settlements along the Green Line, which the current government has no intention of abandoning, effectively will separate the Palestinians on the two sides from one another. It seems to be one more effort to eradicate the cultural memory of the Palestinians in Israel.

Perhaps what makes it so difficult for me to write about the Palestinians inside Israel is my own despair about their future, a gloominess fed by the reality of their situation and by their own hopelessness. While Israel has finally sat down to negotiate with the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, the situation of the Palestinian citizens of Israel continues to be ignored. Will they simply be abandoned to the dust heaps of history?

Kufr Nameh: From Symbol to Concrete Reality

It was wet and windy when the rickety chartered bus carrying the American students arrived at Kufr Nameh. I had joined their excursion as a way to reintroduce myself to some of the villagers and to make arrangements for overnight stays there. My plan was to spend time there and to interview villagers involved in each of the four women's committees, all of which were active in Kufr Nameh.

The bus in which the student delegation traveled had followed a different route than the local one had taken to the village the previous summer, but once we pulled into the dirt clearing at the opposite end of the village, things began to look familiar. And when some of the men I had met then boarded the bus to greet the student group, there was a moment of mutual recognition. Much to my amazement, after we entered the "reception center"—the sitting room where I had first met the villagers and heard Nassim's story of his prison experience—one of the men commented that I had sat in the same chair last time. I jokingly told him, "Yes, it was the same chair, the one farthest from all the cigarette smoke."

The excursion that rainy, cold day proved to be more than just a repeat of my initial June tour. I saw a different side of village organization and more projects. These included the new dairy and the well-established sewing workshop on the village outskirts. Recalling Ali's words six months earlier that "this is just the beginning," I nevertheless marveled at how the hatchery and the medical clinic had blossomed and expanded. The small

dark basement where a few rangy hens had roosted the previous June was being remodeled into a bright, modern medical suite. The cramped, one-room clinic upstairs, with its lone examining table and glass cabinet of medications was about to be supplanted. The chickens had been moved to several new block-house hatcheries, where automatic feeders were being readied for installation. This initial return visit to Kufr Nameh reminded me how much the village embodied the spirit of renewal that drove the *intifada*—and that drew me back to Occupied Palestine. A few days later, when I awoke there for the first time after spending the night, the village came to mean much more for me.

It was bitterly cold as we sat in Nassim and Rawda's house on the mats in the room where I had just awakened. The only source of heat in the entire house, except for the stove in the kitchen, was the small electric heater. Having just crawled out of the warmth of several heavy layers of blankets, with a glass of hot tea in my hands, I felt comfortable. The chill of the cold stone house had not yet penetrated the multiple layers of my clothing. In fact, I think that the only time I really felt warm inside Palestinian homes during wintertime was at night, when I slept in long thermal underwear under mounds of blankets, or the first couple of minutes after I awoke, when I added multiple layers of wool clothing, temporarily trapping the warmth of my own body.

Ayad, the young man who had led us off the bus in June, had also slept in the house the previous night. His English was rather rudimentary, but good enough to interpret as Nassim, Rawda, their children, and I visited. I gave the children some small slate boards I had brought and watched as the oldest, a girl of eight or so, drew an exquisite, perfectly proportioned horse. She lifted the waxy sheet from the board and the image disappeared, but with total equanimity she created another. Watching her, I could not resist the thought that this was a perfect metaphor for the condition of Palestinians: though their houses and economy might be destroyed and their land expropriated, they created anew. Her younger brother had not yet learned the lesson; he cried every time the images he created vanished.

As the rays of the sun began to reach the open ground outside their house, Nassim and I carried chairs out there. It was peaceful sitting in the warm sun, taking in the view of the valley below, with its winding road leading to Ramallah, twelve kilometers away. But I could see the muscles in Nassim's face tighten slightly at the sign of any vehicle moving along the road in the distant valley.

Life in the compound where Nassim and Rawda's house was located slowly came to life: the roosters in one of the nearby large coops were beginning to crow; Nassim's brother, who lived in the front house, where

the "reception center" was, came over to greet us, pulling his cow behind him. After tethering the cow a few feet away, he came and sat down to enjoy the hot, cardamom-flavored coffee that Rawda brought out. Handing us each a cup, she took one, too, and then sat on the arm of Nassim's chair. There was a warmth and an open display of affection between them that I witnessed only rarely among Palestinian couples. As the three of them conversed in Arabic, I just sat there, content to watch the children, who had brought fodder for the cow. Throwing grass clippings at the cow from a distance, they seemed more frightened of it than they were of Israeli soldiers, at whom they undoubtedly must have thrown stones.

The nurturing atmosphere of that morning and the sense of community that I witnessed regularly in Kufr Nameh gave me a glimpse of more than a political symbol, "a liberated village." In my quest to better understand the women I learned much more about both the women and the men of Kufr Nameh.

Part I: A Political Community

Helena, a university student and an activist in the Union of Palestine Women's Committees (UPWC), had accompanied me to Kufr Nameh the previous morning from Ramallah. She seemed to know her way around the village, and we immediately headed for Ali's. A former school teacher, he is one of the few English-speaking people in the village and often acts as a village guide for visiting foreign delegations. His wife, Amal, along with her aunt, her sister-in-law, and several children, were all gathered in the sitting room adjoining the house where the large extended family lives. It was the same room where I first met some of the women from the committee in June. I wondered whether it was the "women's reception center." I had told Ali two days earlier that when I returned I wanted to interview some of the women from the committee, but I was not sure whether Amal and the others had been awaiting our arrival or whether they just happened to be visiting with each other. In any event, after tea and informal chatting, Ali gracefully withdrew, just as I remembered the men doing previously, leaving the stage open for the women.

Amal, her reddish-tinged hair loosely pulled back from her face, cradled her infant, who intermittently cried into the microphone. A very shy twenty-five-year-old, Amal had to be encouraged by her aunt, a woman no more than ten years her senior. Like so many of the women of her age and older women whom I interviewed over the next several weeks, she seemed surprised that I was interested in her. When I asked about *her* life, *her* ideas, she responded, "Who, me?" Ali periodically returned, slowly pushing the door ajar and peeking in. I wondered if he was nervous that his

wife was being interviewed about *her* life, and not only about the *intifada*. At one point he jokingly said to her, in Arabic: "You're not telling her all our secrets, are you?" Later, when I listened to the tape again in Los Angeles with my friend Michel, who retranslated it for me, I wondered whether this exchange was not a sign of the more open communication between them that Amal mentioned in her interview.

Amal's shyness with me never completely disappeared, but by the end of the interview she became more playful, even teasing me. When I asked her if she thought men would behave differently in a future Palestinian state, she joked: "Well, instead of marrying one [woman], they could marry two."

Almost as soon as she laughingly uttered these words, she turned to Helena in embarrassment, asking her not to translate for me. I asked Amal toward the end of the interview what she thought women's role should be in a future Palestinian state. She hesitated, seeming to be at a loss for words. On one of my return visits to the village, she commented: "You know, your questions are good, they give us different ideas. We talked about it in the committee the other day." Despite our cultural differences and the language barrier, it seems that Amal and I had challenged each other to think differently. My questions, motivated by my own brand of feminism, had sparked their discussion. In turn, Amal, with her enigmatic response, had turned my feminism on its head, challenging me not to impose a Western feminist model on Palestinian women.

The constraints of daily life ended this first round of interviews. Amal's aunt, whose story I had started to record, had to return to her village several kilometers away, and Helena had to catch the last bus back to Ramallah.[1] Ali and Ayad then led me to the house of another women's committee member, and still more tea. I learned to be grateful for these endless cups of hot, sweet liquid, because they not only helped to ward off the effects of cold rooms, but they also suppressed, at least temporarily, the severe flu symptoms from which I was suffering.

Later, in the crisp and clear night, I followed the two men again down the road that ran through the village and across the rocky terrain. The sky was filled with stars, and it was very peaceful. This almost idyllic "liberated" village seemed so far removed from the daily horrors of Israeli occupation

1. Although I attempted to conduct life histories with the women, the interviews varied enormously, depending on the circumstances, the availability of a woman translator, transportation, and the rhythm of daily life. For a fuller discussion of this process see my essay, "Advocacy Oral History: Palestinian Women in Resistance," in *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, ed. Sherna B. Gluck and Daphne Patai, (New York: Routledge, 1991).

that I wondered how these people kept the *intifada* alive. As I was to learn a few days later, the idyll was broken often enough to keep them anchored in reality.

The downstairs room of Said and Samira's house was dense with the cigarette smoke of a half dozen village men gathered there. As my relationships became more relaxed, I chided the men regularly about this unpleasant habit. No sooner had we sat down than the ubiquitous tea and coffee were served, and the little electric heater was pulled forward, its glowing coils giving off a paltry heat. This time, in an unusual twist, it was Said who served the tea, and Samira who sat down to join us.

Despite Ali's efforts to impose on Samira what he thought was my agenda, she formulated her own. A tremendously self-assured woman of thirty-five, Samira told me how her life had been changed when she joined the literacy class run by the women's committee. The demonstrations and solidarity visits they coordinated were all well and good, but from the way she talked about it, it was clear that the literacy campaign was what appealed to her the most. Learning to read and write in six months—an accomplishment she mentioned repeatedly—had empowered her. Already able to read the newspaper, she was eager to go further. Samira was justly proud. I learned from the literacy teacher the next day that Samira had been one of the star pupils among the eight women and was a prime candidate for the next-level class that was being planned.

The group of men listened attentively as Samira spoke about her accomplishments and about the economic projects that the women's committee had started in the village. When she finished and excused herself to attend to the children, Said asked if I wanted to record his views, too, and took the chair next to me that Samira had just vacated. Obviously pleased to be the center of attention, he spoke not only in abstract terms about the fact that freedom was for all the "sons" of society, including women, but also about how the *intifada* had helped to change men's behavior. He proudly pointed to himself as an example, declaring, "Didn't you notice, I was the one who made the tea and the coffee!" I laughed. What was so significant about Said's behavior was not that he served the refreshments, but the meaning he ascribed to this act.

A spread of chicken, *taboun*-baked bread, tomatoes and olives awaited us when we returned to Ali's. Nassim and Rawda also joined us, and after we finished eating, Rawda talked a little about her own life, about how she managed between Nassim's long terms of imprisonment. As I spent more time with these people, we became more comfortable with each other and began to develop the kind of natural ease that permitted us to tease one another. When I had met Nassim six months earlier, he was a hero on

display for the group of foreign visitors. There was a part of me that had found it exciting, even adventurous, to be talking with this man who had just finished serving a second term as a political prisoner. Six months later, and especially after we had basked in the warmth of the sun together, I could relate to him and the others as ordinary mortals, although I continued to admire their courage and political commitment.

The informal visiting with the villagers in this political network added a dimension to the oral histories I conducted with the married members of the women's committee. But it was in the interviews themselves that I learned the most about the younger, single members, the women in their late teens and early twenties. From their individual and collective interviews I came to appreciate the depth of changes that were occurring. Whether they wore pants and T-shirts, or whether they wore the same red velour gowns as the slightly older married women, they all seemed to view their future in different terms from those of their mothers' generation and assumed that women would play an active role in a future state. They were not reluctant to expound on these ideas, as Amal and her generation of married committee members were. Nor were they particularly shy about describing their own personal aspirations. Some of them questioned whether they would get married and whether they would have children.

When I later listened to an interview I had recorded with a group of the young committee activists, I had to laugh at how readily I had reversed roles with them and also reacted similarly to being questioned. All along I had thought that the women's frequent "Who, me?" response to my questions reflected the difference between Western individualism and the kind of collective identity they had as Palestinians, the difference between the self-confidence of a college-educated professional woman and a relatively unlettered village woman. But when they turned the tables and asked me about my ideas and feelings, I too responded, "Who, me?" They had punctured the stance of observer that I had adopted as a means to find my way in this relatively unfamiliar setting and culture, and I was no longer certain how to act.

The last time I returned to spend time with women from this committee (UPWC), a university student from Jerusalem accompanied me. She had never been to Kufr Nameh and she marveled at the open signs of defiance everywhere. I was sorry that we did not have time for her to see the less visible signs, to learn about the level of organization and self-reliance of the village. But on that day, people were in an uproar over the torching the previous evening of the sewing factory (workshop) just outside the village. They all presumed that it was the work of an Israeli collaborator, and kerosene cans had already been discovered in the rubble of the building,

among the twisted, burned knitting and sewing machines. The women, especially, were upset about the loss of income for the thirty women who worked there and the more than two hundred who earned money doing home sewing and embroidery for the workshop. But they were angrier about the possibility that there was an Israeli collaborator in their midst, that one of their neighbors might be a spy. Playing on the growing economic hardships, the Israelis were having more luck in recruiting Palestinians to do their dirty work. The major role of collaborators was to provide information to the Israelis, but more direct actions by them, like the firebombing of the cooperative, were also on the rise. The greatest damage they did was probably the distrust they sowed among Palestinians.

Those most engaged in telling us about what had happened to the workshop were the same three women whom I had met the previous summer, the ones who had told me about their *zaatar* cooperative. I was hoping to interview them individually, but real-life tragedy had intervened and I could not simply ignore it. Instead of trying to continue with my own agenda, we simply drank tea with them and listened. And the educated university student who was my interpreter that day learned a great deal about village life.

By then I had developed an appreciation of more than the work of the agricultural cooperative, the health clinic and the particular women's committee that the people with whom I had been spending time were involved. I had also gained at least some understanding of the aspirations and relationships of a varied community of people: couples in their thirties and their young children, older women, and young single women.

One of the most enduring images, and the one that reinforced some of the signals I had been receiving in many of the households I visited, was Nassim's flour-covered hands. While Ayad flagged down the last bus and convinced the driver to wait for me, I rushed back to Nassim and Rawda's house to collect my knapsack and say good-bye to the family. Rawda was in Ramallah, and Nassim's mother was out in the back. He came out of the kitchen and, without embarrassment, extended his elbow as a gesture of greeting. He was in the midst of making bread dough, and his hands were completely covered with flour.

Part II: Tradition and Resistance

Three days later I returned to Kufr Nameh with Amina, the German-born Palestinian from the Women's Action Committee office outside East Jerusalem. We first went to a textile store in Ramallah, where we were to

meet Nahla, the Kufr Nameh activist at whose house we were going to stay. Had Amina not greeted her with familiarity, I would not have taken the small woman who entered the shop for a feminist activist. She was attired in a *hijab,* with only a small portion of her round face exposed, and a matched brown wool jacket and long brown skirt. Nahla came over to us, embraced Amina, and shook my hand vigorously. Then, in a tone of authority, she instructed Amina to go to Kufr Nameh and wait for her; she had business to complete in the Ramallah area, and she would return to the village at 5:00 P.M.

Amina and I were so absorbed in conversation on the bus ride to Kufr Nameh that we were not immediately aware of what an object of curiosity we had become: two outsiders, wearing pants and sweaters, heatedly speaking in English on our way to their village. As the passengers watched us with some amusement, they were undoubtedly also assessing us. As Ali had commented to me during my earlier visits to the village: "There are three kinds of people who visit us: spies, merchants, and friends who support our struggle." The villagers seemed reassured that we fell into the category of "friends" when Nahla's husband, Yusef, caught sight of us and waved to Amina.

If I was unprepared for Nahla's appearance, Yusef's surprised me even more. Amina had told me that he was a *"sheikh"* (used by Palestinians to designate a devout Muslim), and I hardly expected to see such a dashing young man, especially since Nahla appeared anything but youthful in her *sharia* street clothes. I never did learn whether Yusef just happened to be on the 1:00 P.M. bus or whether this was part of the arrangement to accommodate us. In any event, we dismounted the bus together and followed him. The family compound, a complex of six separate buildings, housed a total of thirty-eight members of the extended family: Yusef's mother, his two surviving brothers and their families, his sister and her children, and a cousin.

While we waited for Nahla to return, Yusef, in a mixture of Arabic and English, acted out the story of the slaying of his nineteen-year-old brother by the Israeli soldiers on the streets of Ramallah. It had happened near one of the mosques, close to the station from where the Kufr Nameh bus departs. As a result, many villagers witnessed the shooting. Not only do they insist that it was totally unprovoked, but many wonder if the slain man had been targeted deliberately by the soldiers. Yusef lowered his voice to a bare whisper and became secretive, concerned that his mother might hear, as he showed us the grisly photograph of his brother, his head swathed in a bloodied bandage. This family was hit hard by Israeli repression and

brutality. In addition to the shooting of Yusef's brother, the trade union activist married to one of his sisters had been expelled from the country. Nahla's own brother had also been killed.

We took our cups of hot tea up to the roof after visiting with Yusef's sister-in-law. It was another one of those perfect, clear, peaceful days in the village, and we could see off into the distance. The antenna and solar panel on the rooftop, signs of modern technology, did not detract from the bucolic atmosphere. On the path below the house one woman was herding a goat; another was collecting herbs. A boy practicing with a slingshot was one of the few reminders of the *intifada.* While elsewhere this might be a young shepherd honing one of the tools of his trade, here it was a *shabab* trying to improve his aim for stoning Israeli soldiers if they dared to patrol the village.

Trying to absorb the last remaining heat of the sun's rays—wishing, I suppose, that we could store these up to insulate us from the cold of the house—we spotted Nahla coming down the path toward the house. By the time we came down the stairs to greet her, she had already shed her street clothing and head covering. She looked more like the twenty-seven-year-old that she was. Emerging from the monochromatic brown outer shell, she shed the *appearance* of submissiveness. Only then was I able to shed my Westernized outsider's view of a "veiled" Muslim woman.

There was more to Nahla's transformation than met the eye, as she later disclosed when Amina and I interviewed her:

> I feel as if I am an old woman, sixty years old, when I wear the *sharia* clothes. But when I wear the clothes that I used to wear, then I feel truly like the original Nahla, the one that used to be young.

If Nahla's authority was evident outside the home when she gave Amina and me firm directions, it was demonstrated dramatically inside the home, too, by the way the members of the family responded to her. After the usual round of niceties, accompanied, of course, by more tea and coffee, Nahla turned off the television set and banished everyone from the room so that Amina and I could speak with her privately and record her story. Eager to watch television, after about an hour some of the family members tried to invade the room, but Nahla told them she needed more time.

Nahla, Amina, and I sat close together, hunched over the ubiquitous small electric heater while she told her story over the course of two hours. There was something symbolic about our huddle, and Nahla seemed to derive as much comfort and warmth from us as from the heater. Her interview was full of the kind of personal detail that I had hoped for but

which had been so hard to elicit in the interviews with other women. I am not sure whether the sense of intimacy that she felt was because of her friendship with Amina or because Nahla found in us a sympathetic audience.

Nahla's story was a sad one, rooted in the traditional practice of arranged marriages and of the marital rights vested in the fraternal uncle's son. Her parents had already given their approval for her to marry a man whom she loved, but when her cousin expressed his desire to marry her, Nahla's father forced her to break the engagement with the man of her choice and to marry her devout Muslim cousin instead. Her mother tried to intervene, but knowing that it was an uphill battle to go against convention, she gave up. Nahla also tried to enlist outside support, but nothing worked, and she was married off against her will. She and others in the village told me that this would no longer happen, that the *intifada* had made a difference—at least for most people in the West Bank.

The change was too late to spare Nahla from the marriage, but she had managed to chart her own course within the constraints imposed on her. Her husband was an anomaly in a family that was not particularly religious, and his own sister and sisters-in-law provided her support. Her apparent resignation in the face of incessant battles with her husband about how she dressed belied her feminist consciousness and activity, as she made very clear in her interview:

> I wore the clothes, but I did not give up.
> It was not a surrender. On the contrary,
> this was when the battle started—
> the battle for liberation.

Nahla had succumbed to family pressure to undergo a series of tests to determine why she could not become pregnant. When she discovered that I had made the decision not to have children, her reaction was one of envy, rather than the pity that I have so often experienced in agrarian societies when people learn I do not have children. In some ways, Nahla was more like the younger women's committee members with whom I spoke, all of whom insisted they would only marry a man of their choice and many of whom expressed reservations about having children.

Nahla had started to work as an organizer for the Seamstress Union at the Cooperative Association on the outskirts of the village (the one that was torched by an assumed collaborator) before her marriage. Despite her husband's opposition she continued this activity, leaving the house early in the morning. Traveling around the local district, she recruited women into the Women's Action Committee and helped village women establish their

own local groups. Her own sisters-in-law were among the first to join when the Kufr Nameh group was established.

After the more intimate details of her story were recorded, Nahla allowed the very curious members of her family to come into the room, and we covered more mundane topics in their presence. Yusef returned from the mosque, and along with two of Nahla's sisters-in-law and several of their children, we all settled in for what was probably a nightly ritual.

The television set was turned on, and the next battle for control of the family began to unfold. We were all attentively watching a dramatic program on Jordanian television, when Yusef grabbed the remote control and switched to a Hebrew-language news broadcast. Not understanding Hebrew, and in any event, more interested in the drama they were watching, almost in one voice the women and the children protested. When the children did not manage to dislodge the remote control from Yusef's hands, the group continued their rebellion until their cries drowned out the sound of the television and he surrendered.

Everyone calmed down after a while, and the alternating television viewing and chatting continued the rest of the evening, interrupted only by the whirring sounds of the Israeli helicopters above and the confusion outside as villagers scurried around and in whispered tones exchanged guesses about what might happen that night. Several members of the family went outside on a reconnaissance mission and returned convinced that there would be no raids that night. Despite their reassurances, the rest of us remained on edge most of the evening. Sleep did not relieve the anxiety, and the next morning Amina told me that I had slept fitfully, moaning and talking in my sleep most of the night.

By the time I awakened, Nahla had already left to start her rounds of the villages. I went outside to enjoy the early-morning light. It was peaceful in the village now that the deafening sound of the helicopters was gone, and the only audible sign of life was the bleating of the sheep and goats. One of Nahla's sisters-in-law called out to me to join her and Amina for breakfast. When we finished, she led us over to the house of another sister-in-law, Khadija, where several women were drinking tea. This kind of visiting among women was a natural component of communal village life, but the usual family circle seems to have been extended to include fellow political activists. Khadija showed us how she had converted the storage space beneath her house into a chicken coop and a hatchery and talked about how she was managing since her husband's expulsion. The most difficult thing, she said, was trying to help her children understand why their father could not come home if he was not in prison and had not been killed.

Walking alongside Khadija to the committee's center, we could identify the graffiti of the four major political parties in the PLO, each of which had a significant constituency in the village. And despite their claim of being a liberated village, the large, boarded-up community center building stood as a constant reminder of the occupation. I asked Khadija: "Since the villagers are largely successful in keeping out the army, why don't they simply open up the building and use it?" Apparently, they had tried that once and were warned that the center would be demolished if they used it again. Rather than risk the demolition, the villagers complied with the order.

Our village tour included a stop at the small, unmarked stone building that served as the committee's center. The fifteen-by-twenty-foot one-room interior, which was about the same size as the other village women's centers, was also used for the committee's knitting workshop. But most of the machines were broken and shoved against the wall standing idle until the committee was able to raise the money to have them repaired. Complying with my wishes to interview older women, Khadija led us down a path and over a stone fence to the house of a fifty-five-year-old woman, whose basement had been converted into a sewing workshop.

We did not have a chance to hear much of the story of the woman of the house, Umm Khalil, because once her husband came in, the talk turned to the confiscation of their land. Abu Khalil brought out crudely drawn maps, tax records, and boxes of documents. In a plaintive voice, he described arriving at his land one day, located several kilometers away from the village, to find an Israeli from a nearby settlement putting up a fence. "But this is my land!" he had shouted, to no avail. He had taken his case to the Israeli courts, with the assistance of a Palestinian lawyer, but had suffered the same rejection as most of the other Palestinians whose land continues to be confiscated and used for the settlement of Israelis in the Occupied Territories.

The incessant circling of the helicopter the previous night, coupled with Abu Khalil's story, shook my faith in the ability of Kufr Nameh to survive as a liberated village. But I set aside my gloomy thoughts, at least temporarily, when we returned to Khadija's to enjoy the special dishes that had been prepared for us.

Part III: A Final Visit

Ten days later, Kufr Nameh was under siege. Raided by the army, the villagers were forced to paint out the graffiti, take down all the flags, and stay in their homes. They were placed under curfew and the village was declared a closed military zone. On my next-to-last day in Palestine, the

village was allowed to reopen, and the urban leader of the Women's Social Work Committee drove me there. We were joined by a younger committee member dressed in a new, stylish grey leather jacket.

The village was free of soldiers when we arrived. I was not surprised to see that the graffiti and flags were nowhere in sight, but I wondered how many people had been beaten in the soldiers' campaign to wipe out the graffiti, and if anyone had been injured climbing the electric poles to take down the flags.

We found Umm Khaled just leaving as we pulled up to the committee's center, a building bearing an English and Arabic sign designating it the "Naico Sewing Centre." The thirty-five-year-old leader of the village committee, dressed in a navy blue *thaub,* unlocked the door and ushered us in, pushing aside some of the sewing machines and setting up metal folding chairs. Umm Khaled—the only activist I met in the village who was identified solely by her standing as a mother—was more eager to talk about her husband, slain in 1981, than about the women's committee that she helped to start in 1984. Aside from the visits to the families of the injured and imprisoned and participation in village demonstrations, the sewing project was the main activity of the committee, she told me. When I asked her how her daughter's life might be different in a future Palestinian state than hers had been, after a brief exchange with my guide-translator she replied, "I will educate her. I will educate her to become an engineer." It was only after I returned home, when my friend Michel reviewed the tapes with me, that I discovered that the educated, urban leader of the committee had fed her the response.

The younger women from the committee who joined us after a while were not coached by the urban leader, but they did consult with each other when I asked them their thoughts about the future. Their initial reply referred to how highly educated Palestinians are and how they will "reach a high level in a Palestinian state." It sounded too pat, almost canned. I was more convinced of their own sentiments, however, when the spokeswoman among them added in more natural syntax: "I hope that women will not go back"—a sentiment echoed by practically all the younger women's committee members I had met. My interview with them was cut short when the young woman in the grey leather jacket impatiently announced, *"Yalla"* (let's go).

As we drove out of the village, the two women chatted away in the front seat. Lost in my thoughts, I watched as we passed the signposts that had become so familiar: the wooden fence and door into the compound where Ali and Amal lived, the building that housed the center and the kindergarten run by one of the women's committees, the family compound of

Nahla and the center where her committee was hoping to rejuvenate their sewing workshop, the little stone building where I had met the literacy teacher and a group of young committee members. There was Nassim and Rawda's house, set back from the road, on the right as one leaves the village, where I had stayed overnight. And in front of it, facing the road, the last building I saw as I left the village was the "reception center," where some of the village men had first briefed us in June and where they had welcomed the modest chartered Palestinian bus filled with American university students.

My pleasant memories of the village and my optimism about its future were hard to hold onto as I thought about the recent extended curfew and the raids by the soldiers. In reasserting its control, the army had obliterated the most blatant signs of the villagers' defiance, the graffiti and the flags. But then I recalled the spirit of the people I had met; I recalled the hatcheries, the kindergartens, and the women's *zaatar* cooperative; Samira's pride in her new-found literacy; Nassim's flour-covered hands; and Nahla's refusal to comply with her husband's efforts to rein her in. I fervently hoped that the Israelis would never be able to wipe the slate clean.

Then, as we passed the last electric pole in the village, heading down the hill for Ramallah, I saw it. Someone had already raised a Palestinian flag.

Jerusalem: Pages from a Notebook, V

I did not go into the heart of East Jerusalem very often once I had moved into Kathy's and started spending time in Kfur Nameh. The cold, rainy weather had set in, and my flu fever periodically flared. I was more than happy to hibernate in the apartment between my visits to Kfur Nameh, cuddling up next to the wood-burning stove and visiting with Kathy. As I began to feel better, I looked forward to the seminar on feminist oral history that the Bir Zeit faculty had invited me to give.

It was one thing to hear about the underground classes and another to participate more directly in the intellectual life of the institution. The large, new, well-equipped campus stood empty and quiet above the town of Bir Zeit, but the temporary university headquarters in Ramallah was as active as any university campus I had seen. The street outside served as the student union, and the little *falafel* stand parked there substituted for a cafeteria. Faculty and students rushed between the spread out sites where their classes were held.

No sooner had the previous class filed out of the small conference room than our seminar group filed in. Predictably, it was mainly the women faculty who packed the conference room. Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, whose face and voice became familiar to the West starting with the Madrid Peace Conference, was not able to attend, but we chatted afterward for a while in her office. Dean Ashrawi's temporary quarters were as cramped as everyone else's. As she puffed on her long cigarette holder, she laughingly told me that her office mates in the crowded room had not succeeded in curtailing her smoking.

We all felt the press of time toward the end of the seminar, aware of the cluster of students waiting patiently outside the conference room in anticipation of their next class. Disappointed that we had to cut our discussion short, some of the women invited me to meet at one of their homes several days later. The seven women gathered in the homey sitting room turned out to be interested in talking about more than feminist oral history and women's studies. They wanted to know what I thought about the women's committees, and their initial silent receptivity turned into a spirited challenge: "How can you call the women's committees feminist?"

First I grew defensive, then angry, feeling that I was being unfairly placed on a hot seat. Were they implying that I was an outsider who simply did not understand? While it is true that I was groping my way in an unfamiliar culture and was grateful for any assistance, I also felt that my experiences had offered me a glimpse into the thinking of at least some Palestinian grass-roots women's committee members. As we continued our exchange, I offered evidence of the feminist thinking of some of the young activist women with whom I had spoken. Once we all lowered our guard, we were able to engage in a serious discussion about women's progress. Only then did I begin to understand that the criticisms of these academic women were really a sign of their own impatience with the pace of change and of the testy relationship between them and the politically aligned committees. Each side derided the other for its narrow point of view, accusing the other of not understanding feminism, on the one hand, or the difficulty of combining feminism and nationalism, on the other. Having been on both sides of similar debates in the United States between community activists and academicians, I understood their anger.

Our discussion that rainy afternoon made me more sensitive to the nuances of Palestinian feminism. Ironically, the criticisms of the women's committees—which largely had mirrored some of my own earlier ones—forced me into arguing on their behalf. I had become much more appreciative of the difficulties they faced in walking the fine line between challenging their own culture and retaining broad-based support, between pushing women's issues and promoting the national struggle, which, after all, was still the major priority for most women.

Ten months later, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, during a luncheon meeting at the Oral History Association conference, a group of Arab women signaled to me from across the room. When I recognized the Bir Zeit linguist who had been such an active participant in the discussions we had held, I rushed over to their table, tripping in my excitement. She had been completely enthralled by the idea of oral history, she told me. On a

Fulbright to the United States to help internationalize the curriculum at Rochester University, she took advantage of the opportunity to come to the conference. Later that afternoon we exchanged news and gossip. With a satisfied smile, she reported that after several years the proposal for a women's studies program at Bir Zeit University had been approved.

At the end of my month-long stay I returned to the National Palace for my last two nights and spent more time during the day in the Old City. The throngs of foreigners who had filled the streets of Jerusalem were gone, but the police and soldiers were not.

To avoid the three-hour processing at Ben Gurion Airport, I went to a special terminal in West Jerusalem to check in my bags the evening before my flight. The procedure was considerably more orderly than at the airport terminal, but I still faced an unrelenting barrage of questions: "Where was I coming from?" "Was my friend"—an Israeli with whom I told them I had stayed—home?" "What was her phone number?" I remained composed during these questions and the usual queries about packages people might have given me. However, asking why I had the time available to spend a month there, I felt was an invasion of my privacy. Pulling out my university business card, I explained that it was my winter break. The questioner brought my card over to his superior, and the woman looked at the card, looked at me, and then smiled.

Most of the international participants in the "International Initiative for Peace" had left, but any straggling tourists were suspect, it seemed—especially if they had arrived in time for the events. Apparently the Israelis considered participation in the international peacemaking initiative subversive enough to warrant suspicion. It made me wonder if the high hopes that had drawn the more than thirty thousand Israelis, Palestinians, Europeans, and Americans to form a human chain for peace were based on an illusion.

Perhaps it was not us "outside agitators" that they feared the most. After all, there were no more than two-thousand foreigners who had come to participate in the peace events. The Israeli authorities probably were more worried about the powerful image of more than twenty-eight thousand Israelis and Palestinians linking hands for peace. It gave the lie to the notion of a natural and eternal enmity between Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians.

A Time of Hope

The *intifada* was entering its third year when I left Occupied Palestine in January 1990. A great deal had been accomplished in just two short years. The population had been mobilized and had moved definitively from the passive resistance embodied in the campaign of *sumud* (steadfastness) to active resistance. The stones thrown at soldiers were merely one of the more visible signs of this new spirit. Facing down the "cowboy tax collectors" who leaped off the running boards of jeeps to raid businesses that had refused to pay what they considered illegal taxes was another. And so were the Palestinian flags that were unfurled at funerals and that flew freely in villages like Kufr Nameh.

A quieter and more significant revolution was taking place behind the scenes, away from the eye of the news camera. The network of agricultural cooperatives, small-scale economic projects, health clinics, and education programs that were established or expanded during the early days of the *intifada* was part of an effort to shake loose from the dependency that resulted from the occupation. Palestinian society was in flux, and social experimentation and transformation marked all aspects of life.

The "free space" to develop new social models that had characterized at least the early days of the *intifada* had also provided an opening for women. And just as new national institutions were challenging the relationship between occupied and occupier, the flourishing women's movement was paving the way for irrevocable changes in gender relations.

Many young, unmarried activists questioned whether they would ever marry, whether they would live with their in-laws, and even whether they

would have children. It was not that they were necessarily rejecting these traditional family obligations or challenging the belief in men's and women's complementary roles, but they were talking about them as options to be considered. Some ideas that ran counter to convention might have been a result of the influence of more cosmopolitan, urban feminists. But the programs of the women's committees and the discussions they encouraged, coupled with the leading role women were playing in the *intifada,* helped to embolden the villagers I met.

The formally organized women's movement was by no means monolithic. Strains of old and new ideas were often blended, and the contradictions between them were usually ignored. Traditional women's roles as nurturers were promoted by all the groups, and ordinary village members often cited the visits to martyrs families as the most rewarding element of the committee program. The sewing workshops, too, on the surface, seemed to be merely an extension of women's traditional domestic duties. However, in the context of the *intifada* and the new women's movement, these activities had extended the boundaries of women's traditional sphere and often laid the foundation for much more profound change. For regardless of how closely a group's activity might resemble the older charitable societies, their discourse about women was different.

In the villages and refugee camps there was a generational difference among the women activists that was revealed in more than the way they dressed. They thought about their futures in a Palestinian state differently: the younger, single women usually expected more options to be available to them; the slightly older, married ones with young children, as well as their seniors, hoped that some of the changes that were beginning to take place in their relationships with their husbands would continue. They also looked forward to a future state offering them more services to ease their burdens. Among the younger women there seemed to be a shared purpose. Whether they were from town or village or refugee camp, I regularly noted the ease of the relationship between the highly urbanized university students who usually were my translators and their village counterparts. This was by no means universal, however, as was demonstrated by the young woman with the grey leather jacket who did little to hide her impatience when I interviewed the women from her committee in Kufr Nameh, or the condescending way that the leader of committee had coached Umm Khaled.

Regardless of the differences among the four women's committes, they had been very effective in mobilizing women for the national movement and in channeling their energy in *intifada* activities. This had earned them greater legitimacy and increased respect among nationalist leaders. The

committees broadened their base, reaching into almost every recess of Palestinian society. At the same time they were evolving as feminist organizations.

The call by the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising for the March 8, 1989, creation of the Women's Higher Council served to further feminist interests. The call was the first step in trying to coordinate the sometimes competing activities of the different agricultural, trade union, health, and women's committees. It was intended to streamline the work in each of these sectors so that they could serve the national cause more effectively. When the Women's Higher Council was formed, it brought together not only leaders of the four committees but also independent feminists, that is, those who were not aligned. The new coalition began to discuss more sensitive women's issues, including the problems created by the culture of honor. Women prisoners, for example, were frequently sexually harassed by the Israelis—and sometimes assaulted. In turn, on their release, the men in their family often punished the women for violating the codes of modesty, following the age-old pattern of blaming the women victim, not the male perpetrator.

Spending time talking not only with women but also with men and observing the way couples behaved in their own households, I could see that at least some men were not merely parroting the "right" political line but were also acting on it. A young man who drove me to an appointment detailed how he and his wife shared household responsibilities. He was proud of his standing as a "new man" but admitted that the story probably would be different if they lived in his family home in a village, instead of in Jerusalem. But I also saw less urbane villagers who were "new men."

Of course, these changes were not universal, and men who should have known better often regressed rather than challenge traditional expectations. With a mixture of amusement and disgust, a friend told me how her own college-professor brother quickly discarded the apron in which he had been cooking when the doorbell rang.

A more serious problem than the slow pace of change in the household, however, was the organized resistance to women's changing roles that had begun to surface more and more. Walking in the marketplace of Hebron with a member of the Saer cooperative and a university student who was serving as my interpreter for the day, I was taken by surprise when the student suddenly shouted out: "THIS IS NOT THE ISLAMIC WAY. HOW DARE YOU EMBARRASS US IN FRONT OF OUR FOREIGN VISITOR!" I looked around for what might have provoked her outburst. Walking toward us were three young men with the heavy beards that marked Islamic men activists. They looked as startled as I, though not particularly embarrassed. She pointed to the

eggs in their hands, which they had been preparing to throw at the two of us whose arms were bare.

Incidents like these signaled that more than one contest was taking place. The one with the Israeli soldiers and settlers united all Palestinians. But the contest between the Islamists and the secularists often divided them.

Relations among the secular nationalist forces were also becoming more fractious. There had always been a spectrum of political groups that differed in both ideology and strategy. During the earlier days of the *intifada* their differences were not usually played out in the public arena. Instead, they had tried to work through them privately in order to achieve consensus. It had not been easy, and sometimes the process delayed the issuance of communiqués from the underground leadership of the uprising (UNLU). But disagreements about the stance to be adopted toward Israeli peace forces, for instance, were growing. The argument over the removal of the Palestinian flag at the opening ceremony of the "International Peace Initiative" was a display of differences that would become greater in the course of the following two years. None of these conflicts had yet undermined the vigor and optimism of the *intifada.* In fact, they were signs of a healthy political pluralism.

By the early months of 1990 I had observed and had begun to understand a lot more, and although I was no longer seething with rage, neither was I dispassionate. I was still moved by the spirit of the *intifada,* and I still shared the faith of the Palestinian women who had proclaimed regularly, "We will not go back. We will not be another Algeria."[1] I was also glad that they had added the caveat that "otherwise, we will make another *intifada*—for women!"

The determination, creativity, and courage of the men and women I had met who continued to resist occupation and who dared to envision a different future kept me from feeling despair. It was still a time of hope.

1. This statement refers to the backsliding that occurred after the Algerian war of independence from the French, in which women had played such a key role.

THE POST–GULF WAR ERA

A Time of Reflection

Summer 1991

I was out of the United States during the summer of 1990 and went for long stretches without seeing an English-language newspaper. So the August 2 banner headline about one hundred thousand Iraqi troops amassed at the Kuwait border took me completely by surprise. It was not until I returned home several weeks later that the full significance of the event struck me. Then, I could not shake off a sense of foreboding, a presentiment that this act of aggression by Iraq was going to spell disaster for the Palestinians. My fears were heightened when several Israeli peace activist friends in the United States warned that Israel might use the opportunity to begin a massive transfer of Palestinians.

As the January 15 deadline imposed by the United States approached, and as news of the distribution of gas masks to Israelis was publicized, I could not stop thinking about the people I had come to know. War was no longer just an abstract horror; it had taken on a personal face. I was concerned about Rayna Moss in Tel Aviv when the news of the first SCUD attack was broadcast. And I worried about Suhara and her family in Jabalya Refugee Camp as the curfew imposed on the Palestinians stretched to forty days.

The college campuses in my region swung quickly into action, and from the beginning of the war, teach-ins were organized, and I was asked frequently to talk about the implications of the war for the Palestinians. I read the official statements by the PLO condemning *all* occupations and tried to explain why the Palestinians, nevertheless, supported Saddam Hussein's defiance of the

United States. Many students were receptive, but others jumped at the opportunity to prove how perfidious the Palestinians were. After all, did they not stand on their rooftops cheering the SCUD attacks on Tel Aviv? At the time, I was skeptical of these reports. The currency of these rumors, coupled with the ambiguous public stance of the Palestinian leadership, made for a public-relations catastrophe. All the goodwill and sympathy that the *intifada* had fostered vanished almost instantly.

The effects of the war on the Palestinians seemed devastating. There were reports of economic ruin. The long curfews resulted in the loss of crops. The mass expulsions from Kuwait of Palestinian residents drastically reduced the funds going into the West Bank. And the jobs at which Palestinians worked inside Israel were suspended.

The Gulf War was a decisive turning point. Under American pressure, the stage seemed to be shifting from the streets to the conference room. These changes were not necessarily popular, and a healthy debate was raging by the spring of 1991. It seemed to be a time of self-criticism, of renewal. I felt the need to see for myself what was happening, to explore how life had changed since the earlier, still-hopeful period of the *intifada* and to learn whether the women's movement was making the kind of strides that had been promised in a major women's conference the previous December.

The post-Gulf War period was also a time of escalating horizontal violence. The targets were usually suspected collaborators or Israeli soldiers, but there were occasional random attacks on foreigners. I was eager to return to Occupied Palestine during the summer of 1991, but I was also apprehensive. I wondered how safe it would be to move about on my own.

I especially dreaded facing the despair and suffering that I expected to find. During my three earlier trips, the *intifada* was thriving and the atmosphere of hope that it had fostered made the hardships of life under occupation more bearable. In the aftermath of the Gulf War, though, there were rumors of widespread hunger and of hopelessness, reports that the *intifada* was dead.

When the plane touched down at the airport outside Lod, I was seized by a combination of eager anticipation and anxiety. I worried that, as in December 1989, I might have trouble finding a *servis* or taxi willing to go into East Jerusalem. It was still dark as we taxied down the runway, past a Rumanian aircraft. The latest Soviet émigrés who were disembarking were being ushered in with great fanfare.

Clearing immigration and customs was painless and speedy. I was not asked a single question, perhaps because I had decided to let the Israelis

stamp my passport. After all, they had already left their telltale mark against my wishes the last time I entered, so it no longer mattered. The street in front of the terminal was practically deserted, and I had no choice but to take a taxi. This time the Israeli taxi driver did not hesitate about going into East Jerusalem, nor did he try to use the "danger" factor to his advantage as we negotiated the fare.

Dawn was just breaking as we headed through the mountains toward Jerusalem. We passed the silhouettes of the rusted and twisted armaments from the 1948–1949 war and the rubble of stone that are the last, disappearing physical remnants of the Palestinian villages that once dotted the hills. The taxi drove through the orthodox Jewish neighborhood of Mea Sharim and headed downhill past the 1967 Jordanian-Israeli border and no-man's-land into East Jerusalem. Off to the left a Jerusalem police car was parked, the flashing blue light mounted atop it spinning crazily. I wondered if this was a remnant of the many checkpoints that had been set up around the city during the Gulf War. By preventing Palestinians with green cards from entering Jerusalem, the Israelis had isolated the residents of the eastern portions of the West Bank from those in the south.[1]

Since the beginning of the *intifada,* Friday had been a tense day in East Jerusalem, especially in the neighborhoods in and around the Old City. On my previous visits, the throngs of worshippers heading to al-Aqsa mosque had been watched from all vantage points by the Jerusalem Police and the Border Guard. But this time the atmosphere felt less oppressive. Soldiers were no longer visible atop the parapets of the walled Old City, the mounted police were nowhere in sight, and the few Border Guard on foot were almost lost in the press of the crowds.

Village women in *thaubs,* their produce set out in front of them, lined the sidewalk. There were many more of them than I had seen before. Their produce was more plentiful, too, no longer restricted to a few vegetables and plums—what the Palestinians call "Santa Rosas." The vital street commerce and the large number of shoppers lent an air of normalcy to the street scene. So did the clusters of people sitting on the grass by the walls of the Old City and the men sitting at tables outside the cafe just inside Damascus Gate puffing on an *arghileh* (water pipe) and sipping coffee as they watched the passing crowds.

Inside the gates of the Old City only an occasional patrol of Jerusalem

1. After the Gulf War, especially, most young Palestinian men were prohibited from entering or crossing through Jerusalem. As a result, even after Bethlehem University finally opened, more than one-fourth of the students were unable to reach the campus from their homes in the West Bank.

Police strolled down the crowded lanes. As I watched one of their numbers periodically stopping in a shop, I wondered whether this was a form of intimidation or whether it was their notion of "connecting with the people." Perhaps it was just a way to break the monotony of their patrol. Compared to the snappish, militaristic style of the Border Guard, the bareheaded, older, and often paunchy police appeared less threatening. Even so, they were traveling in groups of six, each wearing a flak vest loaded down with tear gas canisters.

I was not quite sure what the more casual attitude of the soldiers meant nor how widespread the relaxed mood was. For the moment I savored it, hoping that it did not signal the demise of the *intifada.* Later, and in different locales in the West Bank and Gaza, I would see similar signs.

Something else was different, too, and this caused me greater concern: the numbers of women, especially young women, wearing the *hijab.* Looking down the length of the sidewalk on Suleiman Street, the main artery that runs in front of the walled Old City, or the pathway leading down from Damascus Gate into the labyrinth of lanes, I could see almost no women with uncovered heads. I thought it was just because it was Friday and because they were heading to the mosque. But it was the same every day in Jerusalem, and the practice was almost universal in Gaza.

I commented on what seemed to me to be a dramatic shift in women's attire, if not demeanor, to everyone with whom I spoke. The Jerusalemites agreed with me, each offering a different analysis of the increased use of the *hijab.* Some men shrugged it off, attributing it to a remnant of the heightened religiosity during the Gulf War; others felt that it signaled increased hopelessness. The men were not unduly concerned about its significance, but most of the women feared the implications. It was not that they repudiated the legitimate expression of religious piety, but that they were critical of the growing social pressures for women to conform to a male-imposed standard. Women intellectuals were quite alarmed by the way the practice was assuming cultural significance and was almost mythologized in a society where it did not historically have such weight.[2]

The crowds remained lively and thick until about 1:30, the new time that the daily commercial strike went into effect. However, two days later the shops stayed open late, following the relatively new *intifada* practice of keeping them open on alternating Sundays and Fridays. The streets still were deserted at night, but more hidden-away restaurants were open, and the occasional sounds of a party or the clicking of billiard balls from a youth

2. At a conference, Women's Social Issues and Concerns, held the previous December, coercion dictating women's dress was condemned.

center could be heard floating down to the street from behind curtained windows. The music at wedding parties was still canned, but everyone seemed poised, waiting for the first break in the long-standing prohibition against live bands.

Over the years I have learned to be cautious in urban crowds and usually clutch my bag or camera tightly to my body. Nevertheless, in the early days of the *intifada* I never gave it a second thought when I was caught in a crush of people in the Old City. Nor was I nervous being out alone in the early evening hours. But in the summer of 1991, with the spread of random acts of violence, I found that I was more wary. My street-wise antenna—developed at an early age while growing up in a rough neighborhood in Chicago—signaled me to pay more careful attention to my surroundings.

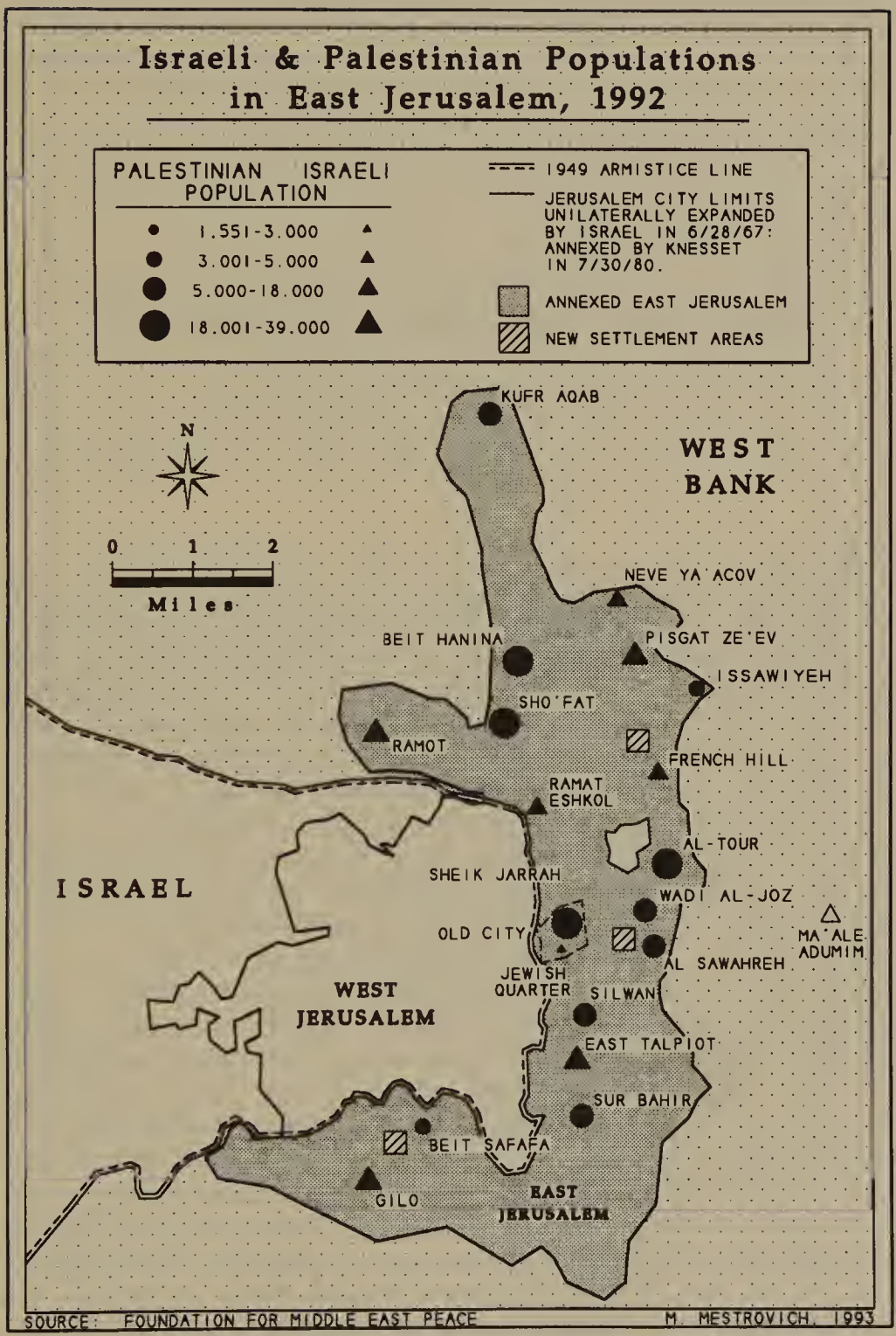
I did not become worried about my own personal safety when I spotted a car outside of al-Masrah Cultural Centre engulfed in flames. I knew that unfamiliar cars with Israeli license plates were regularly torched in East Jerusalem. But I was concerned when a strange, older man stopped me at dusk to warn me about the danger of being out. I had caught a glimpse of him a few minutes earlier as I was walking down a deserted stretch of Old Nablus Road, just past Schmidt's Girls School. He had appeared to be neither a tourist nor a Palestinian, and I had wondered why an Israeli would be walking there at that hour. As I turned onto Suleiman Street, I was taken by surprise when he sidled up to me and hissed: "You shouldn't be out on the streets; there are cars burning and people doing bad things."

I tried shrugging him off, realizing when he told me about a church service that he was probably well-intentioned, someone from one of the nearby Christian centers. It was only later, as I replayed the strange encounter, that I became alarmed about his asking if my family was from "here." And there was his comment, too, that I looked as if I was from Israel or from Russia. Might I be mistaken for an Israeli? In the past that might not have mattered, but the mood had shifted, and there was a growing distrust of strangers. Although they were still isolated incidents, attacks on Israelis had increased. I remained cautious when I walked anywhere in the evening.

I spent almost three weeks visiting and talking with many of the people I had met on earlier trips, sometimes staying in their homes for a night or two or three. I made new acquaintances, too, and stopped in places I had only passed through earlier. Almost everywhere that I revisited, I was immediately recognized and given a friendly embrace, especially by the women. Initially flattered, it seemed to me that the explanation offered by Ali, my host and guide in Kufr Nameh, made the most sense: I was older than most of the international visitors, was not traveling with a group, and did not just pass through, but spent time with them—and returned.

Many of the young people I had met earlier were married or engaged, several of them had picked up more English, and most of them, like the older adults, had slowed down. They were firmly committed to the *intifada* and still were very active, but it was no longer the constant topic of conversation. Perhaps because I was a familiar face, and maybe because I was more relaxed and was no longer so intent on tape-recording their "stories," they were more at ease with me, too. We talked about a lot of things and laughed together a great deal.

The impressions I gained during the summer of 1991 were far different from my earlier ones. Certainly, I was not the same person who first came to Occupied Palestine two and a half years earlier. I knew a great deal more, and the romance of the *intifada* had worn off a bit, too. The period of mass mobilization and heightened institution building had ended, and the *intifada* had taken a different form, both more aimless in some respects and more reasoned and healthy in others. Ineffective firebomb and grenade attacks against military targets were increasing, usually harming no Israeli soldiers, but bringing retaliation and collective punishment down on the heads of the Palestinians. But it was also a time of self-reflection and evaluation: a time to criticize, and not merely lionize the youth who had taken control of the streets; a time to challenge the imposition of the *hijab;* a time to question the old leadership of the PLO; a time to figure out how to accommodate people's everyday social, emotional and material needs for what most people thought would be a long, uphill battle.


Israeli & Palestinian Populations in East Jerusalem, 1992
PALESTINIAN POPULATION
1.551-3.000
3.001-5.000
5.000-18.000
18.001-39.000
ISRAELI
1949 ARMISTICE LINE
JERUSALEM CITY LIMITS UNILATERALLY EXPANDED BY ISRAEL IN 6/28/67: ANNEXED BY KNESSET IN 7/30/80.
ANNEXED EAST JERUSALEM
NEW SETTLEMENT AREAS
N
0 1 2
Miles
KUFR AQAB
WEST BANK
NEVE YA'ACOV
BEIT HANINA
PISGAT ZE'EV
ISSAWIYEH
SHO'FAT
RAMOT
FRENCH HILL
RAMAT ESHKOL
AL-TOUR
ISRAEL
SHEIK JARRAH
WADI AL-JOZ
OLD CITY
MA'ALE ADUMIM
AL SAWAHREH
JEWISH QUARTER
WEST JERUSALEM
SILWAN
EAST TALPIOT
SUR BAHIR
BEIT SAFAFA
GILO
EAST JERUSALEM
SOURCE: FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE
M. MESTROVICH, 1993

Jerusalem: Pages from a Notebook, VI

"I've seen you here before," the young man commented, as we struck up a conversation while watching CNN (Cable News Network) in the deserted bar of the National Palace Hotel. I would have been put off by this tired line if I were twenty-five years younger, but I did remember having coffee and chatting with him on my last trip. Saeb, a lecturer at Bir Zeit University, also runs a minimarket just around the corner from the hotel. Like his father, one of the old businessmen who lounges on the balcony with his cronies for the better half of a day, Saeb is a regular at the hotel. Our conversation that evening began one of two rituals in which I engaged during the evenings I spent at the hotel. The other was setting up my laptop computer at one of the tables on the balcony and drinking coffee and water while I recorded my notes and watched life on the street below.

I had spent my first morning back wandering in the walled Old City, enjoying the crowds and the lively atmosphere. Seeing the open door of the shop of the elderly Bedouin I had met on my very first trip, I was relieved. So he had not given up, after all, as I had feared on my last trip when I had found his shop closed. As I went down the couple of stone steps and stooped under the low door, I was amazed at how well I had remembered the tiny, crowded space. The young man who was tending the shop greeted me cordially, no doubt eager for a customer during such lean business times. His father, Ibrahim, had died just one month earlier, Khalid told me sadly. On his days off from Hadassah Hospital, where he worked as a microbiologist, he was trying to keep the shop open in order to greet all the people who came by to see his father. Indeed, as I spent the next few hours

with him drinking Arabic coffee and chatting, I heard him repeat the story of his father's death to the scores of international visitors who stopped by looking for the old man.

"I used to be an optimist," Khalid told me, "but now I am a pessimist." He reassured me that it did not mean that he had given up, in spite of the fact that he thought "the *intifada* is now only 20 percent of what it was." The hopes he had placed in it had not materialized. Despite his repeated claims of being a pessimist, Khalid did not expect the Israelis to institute a policy of mass expulsion. He was encouraged by the serious analysis and debate that was taking place and was emphatic when he told me, "It's time for new leadership—among all the factions." Much of his feeling of despair, he explained, was because he felt that "we have lost control of our lives." His combination of optimism and pessimism called to mind the title of the novel by the Israeli Palestinian, Emile Habiby, *The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist.*[1] "Yes, perhaps I am a 'pessoptimist' after all," Khalid agreed.

With the exception of an Italian delegation that was staying there, the hotel was practically empty. The staff, who had always been friendly, were eager to break the monotony of their quiet duty. And I regularly chatted with Mohammed, the former house painter who had driven our delegation around during my first visit, and Samir, the Bir Zeit chemist who oversaw the family business in the afternoons.

An early-evening visit with Samir was interrupted by the excited bustle of a wedding party that filed into the deserted lobby. It was the first I had seen in all my trips. The bride wore a pink satin knee-length dress and the groom a black formal suit. Many of the women guests wore the *hijab.* The entourage was followed by a young man who was video-taping the event as the couple and their guests entered the dining room, from where music could be heard. Like the Palestinians, I began watching and interpreting every new turn as a sign of the shifting mood of the people, the direction of the *intifada,* and the intention of the Israelis. I asked Samir about the wedding. "We have been having wedding parties again, it's true. In the past month alone there have been more than four."

I tried not to be out on the streets after dark. But it was only a five-minute walk to the small, informal Jerusalem City Hotel, where I was meeting Ibrahim, the health worker who was always so helpful in making arrangements for me. The lattice-covered garden was so lively—mainly with young Europeans—that one of the Palestinians joked to the bartender, "All

1. Habiby was awarded a prize for literature in Israel in the spring of 1992.

we need is a band." My casual remark about hearing music at the wedding party produced knowing glances between the two men. The man who made the original comment, the lead guitarist in a band in which the bartender also played, exclaimed, "But we aren't supposed to have parties, bands!" The two of them cross-examined me, eager to find out if the music was live. Had the *intifada* ban on entertainment been lifted, they wondered; dare they put their band back together and start practicing?

The constant watching for signs of the mood and pace of the *intifada* and of shifts in Israeli policy sometimes was amusing. Jawdat, the Palestinian journalist who had been our official guide during my first trip, called to ask me to join him at the American Colony Hotel. The courtyard cafe was filled with foreigners and with other Palestinian journalists, who took turns talking into a cordless phone. The waiters were in short red-embroidered tops instead of their usual white cotton jackets. When a young German woman at the next table asked one of them about it, he responded, "It is the anniversary of Demokratia" (i.e., the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the four major factions of the PLO). It might indeed have been the anniversary of the DFLP, but Jawdat's explanation for the celebratory atmosphere made more sense, especially later when yodelers and musicians with long horns appeared: the owner is Swiss and it was the seven hundredth anniversary of the founding of Switzerland.

As dusk fell sirens began to sound, and everyone looked quite puzzled. One of Jawdat's journalist colleagues joked, "Maybe it is a *shabbat* (sabbath) signal" (it was Friday). Remembering that the date was August 2, I surmised that perhaps it was to commemorate the anniversary of the invasion of Kuwait—"or maybe that the Israelis, too, were celebrating the anniversary of Demokratia."

Other signs, the ones the Israelis left, were more ominous. The six-pointed Star of David was painted on trees outside the post office on Saladin Street and on the shutters of Palestinian stores. Were these signaling their claim to East Jerusalem? More of these Jewish symbols appeared every time new Palestinian graffiti was painted on the walls of buildings.

One morning the facade of the National Palace was covered with a large-lettered message painted in red: "The uprising is our choice, the state is our target, the victory for sure ours." Because it was highly unusual for graffiti to appear in English, everyone agreed that this message was intended for Secretary of State James Baker. Or perhaps it was designed for the CNN crew, since there were rumors that a news conference was going to be held. Baker never showed up, and the news conference did not occur, but a camera crew did photograph the graffiti before it was painted over. I

was not sure whether they also took note of the Israeli graffiti painted on the shutters just across the street. Who knows whether they had been put there by soldiers or by the Meir Kahane vigilantes that reportedly roamed the streets of East Jerusalem at night, but more Stars of David, along with crudely drawn menorahs, had appeared.[2] By late afternoon the Palestinian graffiti was blacked out, but the Stars of David and the menorahs remained.

As disquieting as these symbolic statements were, nothing prepared me for the massive takeover of East Jerusalem by the Israelis. New municipal buildings and freshly bulldozed roads were beginning to choke out the cream-colored stone buildings in the old neighborhoods. Inside the walled Old City itself, more buildings in the Muslim Quarter than before displayed the Israeli flag, the telltale sign of settlers. Walking away from the walled city toward the site where the Mandelbaum Gate once separated East from West Jerusalem, I was overcome by a combination of dismay and rage. Stretched before me, replacing the old, circuitous route out of the city, was a new six-lane highway.

Gazing up the incline toward the high-rise apartments stretching into the distance, I thought that if it were not for the construction signs in Hebrew, this could pass for Queens, New York. Within my line of vision, practically all evidence of Palestinian life and culture had been obliterated. I stood muttering to myself as I changed the lens on my camera and did not immediately see the workmen standing not far away. Soon, however, I became aware of what an object of curiosity I had become. Their quizzical expressions as they watched me take photographs seemed to be asking, "What is so remarkable about this road?" For them, as for most Israelis, this road and the expanding settlements to which it led were probably not very remarkable: it was all simply part of the Israeli infrastructure, one more example of the glory of "unified" Jerusalem.

Lone speeding jeeps with their flashing blue lights regularly roamed the streets of East Jerusalem, but the presence of the soldiers on foot patrol was greatly diminished. And the Border Guards no longer seemed to sit at their usual spot on the steps of the East Jerusalem post office. It was as if the Israelis thought the *intifada* was over. Sometimes a small cluster of soldiers would sprawl on the steps of the hotel, or they would post themselves at the corner, stopping all young men and demanding that they produce their identification cards. The presence of the soldiers at the corner was particularly disquieting in the early evening hours when I sat out on the

2. The menorah is a candelabra with eight "arms" used during Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights. One candle is lit for each of the eight days of the celebration.

balcony typing my notes. I tried to position myself behind one of the big stone pillars so I would not arouse their curiosity, but their very presence made me nervous, and a couple of times I simply put away the computer because of it.

Fortunately, they were nowhere in sight the evening when a rather unusual scene unfolded. The regular mix of locals and Italian visitors who gathered on the balcony during the early evening was joined by a noisy crew of young Palestinians who crowded together at a corner table. They did not display the usual reserve of most Palestinians in public: both their clothes and their deportment were somewhat flashy. One woman, especially, was very heavily made up and wore spike high-heel shoes and tight pants. After the men in the group left, driving off in a new Mercedes, two of the women got into an ugly argument. Their voices rose, and one grabbed a chair and lunged toward the other. The businessmen, seated at their usual table at the other end of the balcony, reacted to this outburst with alarm but made no move to intervene. Instead, they sent the waiter over. The mildmannered, somewhat obsequious man in his forties, who walked without lifting his feet off the ground, shuffled over toward their table. But he, too, was reluctant to get involved and in a normal tone of voice clucked at them. Finally the tension broke and the attacker slammed the chair on the ground and stormed off. The waiter came over to me and whispered, "*ameel.*" Once the others left, I asked the waiter more about the group.

He shuttled back and forth between me and the businessmen, trying to clear up my confusion over the meaning of *ameel.* "Collaborator?" I asked. He returned from their table and said, "No, spy," adding that everyone knew that the group was in the pay of the Israelis. Later, when I saw Samir at the desk, I asked about them. It seems that they were from a village near Hebron and had been causing trouble in various locales around Jerusalem. Samir conjectured that the women were prostitutes. Their tight clothing and exaggerated makeup would have been unusual among Palestinian women in any case, but it was particularly striking for young people from the Hebron region, one of the more socially conservative areas in the West Bank. With their big new car and flashy clothing, the group did seem to fit the profile of the kinds of people the Israelis recruited so successfully into their network of informers: drug dealers and prostitutes. On the other hand, I wondered if I was falling into the trap of too readily accepting harsh judgments of those who did not conform to the prevailing social standards.

One of my favorite pastimes when I had free mornings in East Jerusalem was sitting outside at the small juice stand near Damascus Gate. From there I could watch the streams of people coming into the walled Old City. When

I mingled with the other shoppers, my presence was barely noticed. But when I stopped in any of the shops that used to cater to tourists, the merchants usually engaged me in long conversations over the cup of Arabic coffee that they always offered. They were invariably pleased by my interest in fabrics and traditional costumes and enjoyed explaining the origins of old embroideries. Eventually our conversation would turn to politics, and especially to Baker's visits, and I managed to hear a lot of different viewpoints.

Wandering the narrow lanes of the Old City, I saw very few foreign tourists and not more than a handful of Christian pilgrims along Via Dolorosa. Only an occasional very young European with a knapsack or backpack ventured here anymore. Stopping in for a *falafel* sandwich in the Old City before the businesses all closed, I was usually the only stranger. One day, sitting at a table near the revolving spit where the *shwarma* (roasting lamb) was being tended by the owner, I struck up a conversation with him. "Yes, business is bad," he told me, "and I lose a lot of money with the early closings, but it's good, too, because I have to get home to make peace between my wives."

His manner was quite casual, but I wondered if he was trying to shock me. I was not ignorant about the practice of polygamy, nor did I unthinkingly heap scorn upon it. Nevertheless, I was somewhat taken aback. Perhaps it was because this husband of four wives and father of seventeen children was so completely urban and relatively young, not more than forty-five years old. Why had I not encountered this before? Was it because I was spending my time mainly with activists? Or was it possible that they were deliberately hiding it from me? I decided to pay more attention and ask more questions.

The Jordan Valley: Land and Water

The ride from Jerusalem to Jericho does not take much more than forty-five minutes along the new highway, but it entails a drop from the cool, higher elevation (2,700 feet) to the hot plains of the Jordan Valley, below sea level. The steep, rocky terrain along the way is still home to some Bedouin families.

From the tropical, ancient city of Jericho the road heads south to the Dead Sea and north following the course of the Jordan River. The homes on the opposite bank of the river, in Jordan, can be made out clearly, but barbed-wire fences erected by the Israelis make it impossible to approach the river on the Palestinian side.

The Jordan Valley was one of the first areas where Jewish settlements were built following the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank. In contrast to the more recent settlements, which are largely bedroom communities, these early ones are working kibbutzim (collective farms). For the most part their buildings are not visible from the road, but the land which they have expropriated for farming is.

The refugee camps that had lined the road prior to the 1967 war are largely deserted now, the crumbling remains of the adobe or stone buildings the only remaining sign of the thousands of Palestinians who once lived there. The remaining Palestinian population of fifteen thousand is spread out in small clusters along the valley floor.

I was eager to see Jericho and the Jordan Valley in the light of day. It had always been dark on past occasions when I had reentered the West Bank from the Galilee through the Jordan Valley. And strangely, each time there had been an almost full moon illuminating the landscape. My only images were of the moonlit crumbling buildings of the nearly deserted refugee

camps, or of the lights of the Israeli jeeps when I caught a fleeting glimpse as they patrolled the sandy strip along the Jordan River. They make a pass on the dirt road along the fenced border every thirty minutes, sweeping the sand so that the footprints of "intruders" from Jordan can be detected easily.

The driver came by early in the morning, and we headed to el-Bireh to pick up the members of an American delegation that I was joining for the trip. All Ibrahim had told me was that the group included a couple of Palestinian-American teenagers and an older American couple who were both lawyers. Slowly they assembled, the teenagers straggling behind. Through their sleepy-eyed gaze, the pair of teenage brothers recognized me. We had met just two months earlier at a workshop in Los Angeles.

The older adults and I were busy talking as we drove up French Hill. To my absolute delight, as we exchanged information I discovered that the lawyers were Alice and Staughton Lynd, long-time labor and peace activists. To add to the feeling of familiarity with this little band, it turned out that the Palestinian-American serving as their guide had been working in Ohio on a project in which I was also involved: organizing against the corporation that manufactured the tear gas that the Israelis used.

Our conversation was interrupted by our guide, who was pointing to the hill on our right where massive earth-moving equipment loomed, behind which rose the square block buildings of an Israeli settlement, Ma'aleh Adumim. Shortly after my arrival the previous week, this settlement of fifteen thousand had been granted city status. The first officially designated Israeli city in the West Bank, Ma'aleh Adumim has come to represent the second stage of "Judaization" of the West Bank.

An hour later, as we drove into the center of Jericho, I was struck by how much the lush, green square in the middle of Jericho looked like a plaza in Mexico. The shops surrounding the square were filled with artfully arranged, luscious-looking produce. Instead of the coconuts that dropped from the Mexican palm trees, here there were beautiful golden clusters of dates that had been harvested from the nearby palm groves. One of the big differences, however, was the immediacy of the military conquest. In Mexico, it was marked by the Spanish architecture of many of the old buildings. In Jericho it was not just a historical memory but a living reality, noted by the oversized Israeli flag flying from the military outpost in the middle of the square. The sight of uprooted banana trees and demolished buildings on the outskirts of town served as another reminder.

Not only does the town of Jericho, with its semitropical atmosphere, look very different from the rest of the West Bank, but so do many of its people. Originally of African, perhaps Ethiopian, descent, they are very

dark. The women wear long black *jillabya*-type garments rather than the embroidered *thaubs* traditionally worn by most Palestinian women. Some of the men were in Western attire, but most of the shopkeepers wore white *jillabyas*—much more appropriate in this very hot climate. Since not many foreign visitors come through anymore, they were curious about us. While we waited for the agricultural committee member who was going to accompany us, we chatted with several shopkeepers briefly as we admired their produce. One of the merchants gave us a large cluster of fresh dates when we bid him good-bye, *"Maa salameh."*

On the drive north from Jericho, on the east side of the road, extending almost to the Jordan River, were lush palm groves, banana plantations, and vineyards. The ground was moist and looked fertile, and there was a fresh smell in the air, as after a rain. These were the farms that now belong to several kibbutz settlements back in the hills, settlements that evolved gradually from military outposts, with farms established on the floor of the Jordan Valley on land confiscated from Palestinians.

To the west of the road, where the land is still in the hands of the Palestinians, the landscape is dry and almost barren. Only a few shriveled banana trees or colorless palms can be seen adjacent to the adobe brick houses that dot the terrain. The water has been cut so drastically, the Jericho engineer who was our guide told us, that only about one-third of the land can be irrigated at a time. I recalled the description by the former mayor of Hebron of the water distribution there, where three separate pipes emanate from the municipal water tank. The first draws the water from the bottom third of the tank and is delivered to the Israeli settlers; the middle pipe draws water for the Israeli military; and the third pipe, which draws the water from the top of the tank—if any ever reaches that level in this dry and often drought-stricken region—is for the Palestinians.

We pulled up to a small cluster of houses, one of the extended-family compounds that comprise the spread-out village of Marj en Naj. Mamdouh Ali Abu Jarar, our host there, came out to greet us, looking crisply cool and elegant in his dazzling white *jillabya* and white *hatta* (*kuffiyah* headdress). He ushered us into a square, one-room cement building. The only piece of furniture in the room was a battered, but functioning, television set, on which sat a vase with a single silk flower and a telephone.

The large, empty room was immediately transformed as mats (similar to futons) were carried in and placed along three walls. Pillows to lean on were distributed among the guests, and the overhead fan was turned on to relieve the extreme heat. Our host, who sat on the floor by the open doorway, was never at a loss for words as he told us his story. His eloquence

was evident to me even without understanding Arabic, and the cadence of his delivery sounded poetic.[1] The determination that I detected in his voice and the dignity of his demeanor were matched by his words:

> I am surprised. Delegations come and ask us about the problems of agriculture,
> as if we had an ailment and they are coming to prescribe a cure.
> We are not trying to cure an ailment
> or open a new trade route for our products.
> We have a basic and primary problem—
> we have no freedom.

Mamdouh was born in Marj en Naj, a community of about fifteen hundred people, whose roots were in pre-1948 Palestine. His parents had fled to the Jordan Valley from what is now Beersheba, where his grandfather had owned 13,000 *dunums* (3,250 acres) of agricultural land. They had thought they would be staying for only a few months and initially had not put down roots. Eventually, in 1960, they settled in what is now Marj en Naj and rented land from the Jordanian government, dug their own wells, and became self-sufficient. Under Jordanian law, after seven years they would have taken ownership of the land they were working. But following the 1967 war the Israelis seized over two-thirds of the land in the Jordan Valley and did not honor these agreements. Now, most of the Palestinian farmers lease the land on a yearly contract.

"Land and water, these are our problems," Mamdouh continued. Because of the high saline content of the water, about all he can grow on his 64 *dunums* is eggplant and tomatoes. The Israeli kibbutzim treat the water, but the Palestinians are forbidden to install desalination equipment—which they could not afford, in any event.

The high cost of water, plastic, and fertilizers, coupled with the prohibition on exports, has made it impossible for the Palestinian farmers to prosper. And in the wake of the Gulf War and the forty-day curfew imposed by the Israelis, Mamdouh and his neighbors became more heavily indebted. Able to do little more than feed their animals during the occasional two-hour respite from the strict curfew, these farmers lost a whole year's crop.

Despite the occasional flashes of anger in his eyes, Mamdouh's words were measured and calm, almost dispassionate. "We as farmers had an extra burden on us in the Gulf War. The worker stayed home and did not

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1. My initial impressions were confirmed when I later received a transcribed, translated text of our conversation prepared by Alice Lynd and Sam Bahour. The quotes are from this text rather than from the simultaneous translation I recorded at the time. My thanks to Alice for sharing this transcript with me.

work, but the factory was still there when he went back. When we went back, we found no water had got to our land, the crops died, and we lost what we started with." The only way our host would be able to get some money to replant a new crop was to sell off some of his animals or reduce the acreage he leases.

For many Palestinian farmers this is the last resort, as Mamdouh so sardonically described:

> After that stage, the next stage is to sell my labor. Then I will grant Gorbachev and Bush and others the ultimate thanks for sending us [the immigrants] Israeli settlers that are able to give us work.
> Have we come to this, that we have to sell our labor to work on *our* land?"

I asked Mamdouh one last question as we were finishing our drinks and preparing to leave: What did he think of the Baker trips and the talk of a peace conference? His short, crisp answer displayed the same economy of language that marked his earlier comments. "The current peace efforts are morphine, to keep us quiet for a little while longer."

As I left the cool, dark room and emerged into the bright sunlight, it took a moment for my eyes to adjust. Then I noticed one of the donkeys taking protection under the shade of a tree and a heavy tractor parked on the back of the land. I realized that the tractor probably would have to be sold soon, making Mamdouh's work still harder. Wandering around the arid land to take some photographs, I inquired about the inhabitants of the other houses. Three brothers, with their families, lived on the compound. On learning that the oldest had four wives, I remarked that he must be rich. "No, they need him," came the response. With the large out-migration of men, perhaps this was how the lopsided sex ratio was being accommodated. Yet I was reluctant to pursue the question further, fearful that my curiosity might betray my uneasiness.

We were all pensive as we headed back down the main road toward Jericho. Looking out the window at the lush fields on one side and the dusty land on the other, I remembered the refrain I had heard regularly in my youth: how Israelis "made the desert bloom"—as if by magic. In the Jordan Valley the truth was starkly revealed. First the land was stolen, then the water.

We left our engineer guide in Jericho after joining his family for lunch and headed back to Jerusalem. I was glad when I learned that we were going to make a stop in Jiftliq, a village of about two hundred that I had visited two years before with the doctors from one of the health committees. The reports I had been reading of regular military raids on Jiftliq and the

imposition of curfews had baffled me totally. I could not understand why such a small, impoverished village would bring down such military might, and I wondered if I was mistaken about the identity of the place I had visited earlier.

One of the village men greeted us as we pulled onto the dusty road leading to the small village. The cluster of buildings serves as the hub for a spread-out community of two thousand. Hassan introduced himself and led us to a small building that housed a kindergarten run by the women's committee. By the time we had settled into the child-size chairs, arranging ourselves around the low table, and had finished our introductions, the kindergarten teacher and the nurse had arrived. Their reserved manner and *sharia* dress (long dresses and the *hijab*) in no way affected their participation in the discussion. Very quietly, the kindergarten teacher—who apparently understood enough English to follow our questions—coached her male colleague whenever he hesitated. As we drank warm orange sodas, the villagers described for us the growing hardships they had experienced. Their already miserable condition had worsened during the Gulf War as a result of the long curfews that prevented them from harvesting their crops or running the motors for irrigation.

Their troubles had begun much earlier, they told us, after the occupation in 1967, when they became more and more indebted as a result of the economic restrictions. Now most of the land in the village is controlled by an absentee owner in Nablus, who also controls the well. Only one of the families in the village owns its land. All the rest are sharecroppers. With undisguised hostility toward their Palestinian landlord, they complained that since the beginning of the *intifada* he no longer markets their eggplant, squash, beans, tomatoes, watermelon, and cucumbers. When some Israelis and Palestinians from inside the Green Line came to make direct purchases from the farmers in the region, Israeli tax collectors followed them there in jeeps and successfully intimidated the potential customers.

"The other big problem for the people in Jiftliq is housing," the young villager complained. "The people want to stay, but they are not allowed to build." As elsewhere in Occupied Palestine, if they went ahead and built a house without the required permits, the Israelis would demand that they tear it down. "But," he inquired beseechingly, "what man can tear down something he has built himself?" So the bulldozers are brought in, usually accompanied by fifty or so soldiers to maintain calm, and the houses are demolished, twenty or so a year.

When I asked whether the reports I had been reading were, indeed, about this very village, they replied that they were. In fact, the most recent

curfew had just been lifted. It was imposed after more than four hundred soldiers raided the village looking for some "wanted" youths. Our host recounted how all the men had been ordered out of their houses, their hands tied behind their backs and their heads held down between their legs. Warming to the subject, he recited a litany of abuses, including the beating of an eighty-year-old man, the regular harassment of the women while the men were out in the field, and the usual ransacking of the houses. It was inconceivable to me that an unarmed village of two hundred farm families could pose such a threat to the Israelis that it would bring down such treatment. Had I not been reading reports from human-rights agencies, I would have thought that Hassan's claims were grossly exaggerated.

We ended our visit on an upbeat note, as the local villagers pointed with pride to the accomplishments of the *intifada* in the village. In addition to the clinic there was a child care center, which served about twenty-five children. The women's committee, with its dozen or so active members, also conducted health education and literacy classes. And with the assistance of the agricultural committee, the villagers were able to feed themselves. Just the previous day, each family had been given five laying hens.

Each of us traveling together that day had a different response to the stories we had heard. The three teenagers were absorbed in conversation trying to figure out what kind of project they might initiate when they returned to the States. The Lynds were convinced that the tide could be turned if a delegation of foreigners simply showed up and started constructing houses in the West Bank. Although I admired their spunky proposal for massive civil disobedience, it seemed unrealistic in the face of military occupation.

Recalling the accounts of the farmers' increased indebtedness, I was a bit more pessimistic. They were losing their land not only to Israeli confiscations but also to wealthy Palestinians. It might be Israeli policy that forced them into this bind initially, but clearly unscrupulous Palestinians were also benefiting from it. I was disappointed but not surprised that the dispensations that landlords had been asked to give in the early days of the *intifada,* including drastic reductions in rent, were no longer being made. It was obvious that the gulf between the haves and the have-nots was widening even further.

Kufr Nameh: Are the Flags Still Flying?

I did not have to wait too long to be picked up at my usual place, just off Palestine Square in the center of Ramallah. It was three o'clock in the afternoon and eerily still. Few pedestrians were on the street, and no soldiers were in sight, not even atop the building across from the *servis* stand. "Things are different now than when you here before," friends had told me, and they advised me not to wander around Ramallah or take the bus to Kufr Nameh on my own. They were right, as I learned only too well the next day. It seems that at just about the same moment that I was waiting for the medical team with whom I would ride to Kufr Nameh, elsewhere in Ramallah a military patrol was the target of a failed hand-grenade attack.

No sooner had I arrived from Jerusalem than a young man pulled up to the curb. "Sherna? I'm going to take you to Kufr Nameh. The doctor is having his car fixed and he's going to be late." My young guide was one of the lead singers in a folkloric group. The rest of the troupe was on their way to a concert tour in the United States, but he had been refused permission to leave with them.

Climbing up the last rise into Kufr Nameh and heading for the new clinic building, I noticed how peaceful the village seemed and how much pedestrian traffic there was on the road. I was surprised by the number of women wearing the *thaub*. Perhaps it was just that there were many more women on the street. As I searched for signs of change, I was glad to see that the women had not abandoned the traditional white chiffon scarf that they draped loosely over their heads for the *hijab*.

My driver led me down the stairs to the now fully operational clinic, where several women waited with small children to see the doctor. They did not seem particularly annoyed when they learned that he would be delayed. One of the children had been sent to fetch Ali, the former schoolteacher who had served as my village host in the past. Although I had sent a message to him earlier that I was returning to Kufr Nameh and wanted to stay for several days, he was genuinely surprised to see me as he came down the steps and spotted me. "Sherna, my friend! They told me only that an American woman was coming. They did not say it was you. "*Ahlan*" (welcome).

Eighteen eventful months had passed since I had last seen him, and we had a lot of catching up to do. Everyone was well, Ali told me. Yes, they had received the letter I sent after my last visit; no, the villagers were not under house curfew during the war, only village curfew. "Where are all the flags?" I asked, "Isn't Kufr Nameh a liberated village anymore?" The soldiers had preceded me by about two hours, Ali told me, by way of an explanation. But over the course of the next three days the flags were not replaced as they usually had been during my previous visits.

We entered the gate into his family compound, and I started to head toward the sitting room where we had spent so much time during my last visit. "No, we now live in back," Ali beamed, as he steered me around the side of the house to a new building on the back of the lot. The living space was on the second floor: a large living room, one bedroom, a kitchen, a bathroom and a lavatory that were not quite completed, and a very wide hallway that served as the sleeping space for the children. Downstairs were two animal pens; the chickens and goats kept there provided enough milk, eggs, and meat for the entire extended family living in the compound.

Amal looked up from her embroidery as we entered, and the expression on her face changed from one of pleasant hospitality in greeting a stranger to genuine pleasure in seeing someone familiar. We embraced and I handed her the package I had brought. The coffee and mixture of nuts and seeds were welcome, but as hard as she tried not to embarrass me, Amal could not restrain her laughter as I pulled out a large bag of plump grapes. When she took me outside and pointed to the grape arbor in the front yard, I had to laugh at my own stupidity, too.

Amal was not as shy as before, and despite our language differences we related to each other a great deal over the next several days. I noticed, too, that she asserted herself with Ali and did not stay in the background as much as she had before. I do not know whether these were signs of change, perhaps because she now had her own living space, or whether I was merely

more sensitive to these nuances. Maybe it was because I was no longer a stranger and she was more comfortable with me, especially since she had learned a few words of English.

There was a nice breeze on the roof of Ali and Amal's new house, and it was obviously a haven from the summer heat. Cushions and old chairs were scattered around. By careful positioning it was possible to avoid the hot summer sun and remain in the shade, no matter what the time of day. It was a great spot from which to observe village life, to see who was walking down the road, and to watch for the bus.

My first visit to the rooftop, with its spectacular view of the surrounding countryside, gave me a quick lesson, too, in how the Israeli settlements were encroaching on the village. Regardless of which direction I turned, there was a hilltop settlement. The road that was being bulldozed left an ugly wide swatch where an olive grove of more than one hundred ancient trees had once stood. Looking out over the disturbed terrain, I remembered my conversation with the old farmer whose land was confiscated. I wondered if it was his trees that had been uprooted to make way for this new settlement road.

This was also the vantage point from which the entire family had watched Iraqi SCUDS falling on Tel Aviv. "Yes," Ali admitted with an odd mixture of sheepishness and amusement. "We stood here and whistled and cheered." It was the moment that I had dreaded, one that I had known would come inevitably. I had hoped that it would be deferred until I had fully renewed my acquaintance with Ali and the others. My worry was unfounded, though, because Ali and I were able to have a serious discussion about the war and found that we largely agreed on many points: the United States–led offensive was immoral, the Palestinian leadership had bungled their public pronouncements, and the war was a disaster for the Palestinians.

Ali hastened to assure me, "We weren't cheering the deaths of people. Don't you think you would feel some satisfaction at seeing your enemy getting a taste of their own medicine?" A joke that had wide currency in Kufr Nameh illustrated the feelings of the villagers and best accounted for the continued popular support for Saddam Hussein. "It takes ten Israeli patrols to impose a curfew on Kufr Nameh, but Saddam can make a curfew on Tel Aviv with just one SCUD."

I understood how visceral this reaction was, yet I found it hard not to become exasperated at what I felt was a continued misplaced trust and relatively uncritical admiration for the man who had "stood up to the United States." Although I tried to be polite whenever the subject came up,

I was forthright about my position and became involved in some heated exchanges. Sometimes Ali translated fully and a serious argument ensued; other times he seemed to want to circumvent any controversy.

During the summer daylight hours the rooftop post served as a retreat, and one by one different members of the extended family joined us there. With barely a word to anyone, a middle-aged man in a *jillabya* went over to where some mats were piled and started to rearrange them. I thought that perhaps he was going to perform evening prayers, but instead he made himself comfortable and pulled a book out of his pocket. Amal, who had brought up some coffee and joined us, walked over to him and silently set down a cup next to him. When I asked about the man, Ali told me it was his father. The fact that I was not introduced to him and never saw the man again was odd. But, as was often the case in trying to judge where the line was in asking personal questions, I did not feel comfortable inquiring about the obviously estranged relationship between them.

My hair was not as curly as it had been the last time I had visited, but the old woman recognized me from a distance. I had stayed overnight with her son and daughter-in-law, Nassim and Rawda, on my visit almost two years earlier. She rushed over from the stone wall where she was resting and covered me with kisses. Grasping my hand, she led me down the path toward one of the three houses in the extended family compound. Her eldest son stared and stared at me, then proclaimed, "We saw you on television. It was during the war." The others chimed in, agreeing with him, and would not believe my denials. While it is true that I had spoken at various teach-ins, I doubted that they had been broadcast on the international news. They were so pleased with the idea that it was hard to deflate them, so I only suggested lamely that it must have been someone who looked like me.

The old woman became my protector, and when her youngest son, who was sitting beside me, lit a cigarette, she berated him. Remembering how I had coughed from the cigarette smoke last time, she made him change seats with her. She was also the first to reply when I asked what they thought would come of Secretary of State Baker's efforts, then under way, to promote a Middle East peace conference. "Nothing," she replied, and the others all echoed her pessimism. One after another they repeated glumly, "Nothing."

Waiting patiently for Ali to translate a heated exchange in Arabic among the men, I was surprised when he laughed and explained that it was not a political discussion at all, but a rather mundane disagreement about chicken raising. So it was true, people no longer ate, slept, and drank the

intifada. And they argued about more than politics, here as well, far from Jerusalem.

On the way back to Ali's house we said hello or briefly chatted with the clusters of people sitting along the roadside, visiting with each other as dusk fell. Was this a sign of the greater unity among the villagers that Ali had mentioned, a banding together because they felt forsaken by the world, including other Arabs? Or perhaps it was simply a part of normal village life, a temporary respite from occupation as people enjoyed the freshness of a summer evening.

The calm was illusory and the respite indeed temporary. Although I stirred during the night whenever the two-year-old woke up crying, I did not hear the Israeli army raid on the village at 2:00 A.M. Ali's announcement of the arrest of eight men, including one with whom I had visited the previous evening, came as a cruel shock.

Ali watched the road from the living-room window as we all had breakfast. He dashed off as soon as he spotted the bus to Ramallah, where he had a job as an accountant. Amal began what turned out to be five hours of nonstop work. She would not let me help her, so I spent the morning on the rooftop, playing with the four children and teaching them some English words. The very feisty and independent two-year-old wandered in the family compound alone. No one seemed particularly worried about his going up and down the concrete stairs alone, even though there was no bannister or protective railing. The three older children were absolutely delighted with the small paper dancing doll I gave them, and they took turns playing with it, with the usual amount of fussing when one held onto it too long. They pouted only briefly when the baby returned with the bare stick. He had peeled off all the moving parts.

The five-year-old boy became bored once we stopped coloring, and his seven- and nine-year-old sisters and I began to teach each other English and Arabic words. Eventually they engaged me in a sign-language political discussion and reacted with great surprise when I gave the same thumbs-down sign to each of the names they called out: Shamir, Mubarak, Asad, and Saddam.

Every time one of the children wandered off, he or she returned with a new snack. Later I joked with Ali that I was not hungry because the kids had been harvesting the garden all morning. First they brought in sunflower seeds, which they picked straight from the flower, then grapes from the arbor, cucumbers from the vine, and fruits from the cactus plants. Even the two-year-old came trudging in carefully balancing a bowl of *lebneh* (a kind of yogurt cream cheese) and bread.

By 11:30 Amal had made breakfast, washed the clothes, assisted by her oldest daughter, who brought water from the well, made dough for the bread, cleaned several chickens, and mopped the floors. It was no wonder that she had to wash the floors daily, with all the food that ended up there from the kids and the constant stream of visitors cracking sunflower seeds. Once these chores were done, she was ready to bake the bread in the *taboun*. The coals in the large clay oven, used and maintained collectively by the women of the extended family, had only to be fanned to revive them. Amal wiped her brow frequently as she bent over the hot coals inside the *taboun*. It took less than an hour to produce nine of the fifteen-inch flat loaves. These would last the family for three to four days.

No sooner had Amal plopped down on the sofa, exhausted, than Ali returned from Ramallah. A man thought to be an Israeli collaborator had been killed by other Palestinians. Ramallah was placed under what would become more than a week-long curfew with checkpoints all over.

I spent my days in the village visiting the clinic and the cooperative and with many of the people I had met before, especially the women from the committees. I had my tape recorder with me, but I did not use it, and this seemed to change my standing. The villagers knew that I was writing a book, but they became accustomed to me and treated me more like a distant relative returning for a visit than a writer who had to be courted. After welcoming me and chatting briefly, they often turned to their own conversations.

While the dairy venture had not worked out, and the large barn had been converted into another hatchery, the agricultural cooperative was generally successful. It boasted a membership of more than ninety families, an old Volkswagen van, four employees, and a full-service store. Butane tanks for delivery to the villagers (at a 15 percent discount to members) were being loaded onto the van when we stopped by the store. Glancing around at the shelves inside, I could not help noticing how many goods carried Hebrew labels, a sign of the slackening of the boycott of Israeli goods. Nevertheless, the cooperative was another one of the success stories of the *intifada*.

So was the clinic, which had become a thriving six-day-a-week operation, serving the needs of almost five thousand people from Kufr Nameh and the four nearby villages. The dentist, who saw an average of fifteen patients a day during his five- to six-hour stint, proudly showed me his modern, equipped office. With gleaming white walls and the latest technology, it was a far cry from the first dental clinic I had visited in Nablus.

The Ramallah physician who staffed the Kufr Nameh clinic was a less

formal man than the dentist. A gentle man with a scraggly beard, he was comfortably dressed in blue jeans and sandals. When one of the villagers came rushing in carrying his screaming son, everyone parted and made way for him. The first thought that crossed everyone's mind, of course, was that he had been injured by the Israelis. "Nothing serious," the doctor told me. "He just fell down and scraped himself, but now we can give him his weekly shot for childhood diabetes. It's been harder and harder to get him here."

The doctor treated the boy with tenderness and care, assisted by Hanan, one of the young committee activists I had interviewed previously. Like Amal, she also seemed less bashful than before and no longer covered her mouth and lowered her eyes when I asked her a question. She loved her work at the clinic, and the next day she told me about her aspirations to acquire medical training and return to the village to serve it better. This alternative was more appealing than the idea of marriage, she told me, showing greater certainty than at my previous visit. On that occasion she had merely muttered that she "was not at all sure she wanted to marry," but the almost instantaneous reaction of *"la, la, la"* (no, no, no) from my translator had cowed her.

Another young committee activist also worked at the clinic. She had been trained to assist the lab technician with the rudimentary tests they ran. The clinic was providing these young village women with avenues for their new aspirations.

The women's committee, which fostered these aspirations, continued to diversify its activities, serving the village with various projects, including an expanded kindergarten, a literacy class, an English class, and a tutoring program for some of the "slow" people in the village. The active members assured me that they continued to read and discuss women's issues. Nevertheless, I sensed that they were placing more stock in discussions about the national situation and were giving women's issues short shrift. I tried pushing them on this point, but I was touching a sore spot, and Ali simply stopped translating my questions. But between the rudimentary English of some of the women and of a cousin who was visiting them, I managed to keep the conversation going. By then I had become accustomed to the course these discussions followed, and I was not as quick to back away from apparent disagreements.

Initially wary of Western feminism, grass-roots activists would deliberately focus on the national question as a way to counterbalance what they assumed would be my emphasis on gender. Once they understood that I fully accepted the way that national and gender struggles were inextricably linked, they let down their guard and were more willing to be critical of

their own culture and not merely blame everything on the occupation. Ultimately, they did admit that more attention was again being devoted to the national question. At the same time, they insisted, they were engaged in a program of teaching women their rights in the house, with the husband and the family, proclaiming: "We know that when we get our state, we must continue to fight for women." I turned to Ali, who had been showing obvious signs of discomfort through the entire conversation. "And who," I teased, "is teaching the men how to behave with the women?" He laughed nervously but did not reply.

I had already made arrangements to meet Nahla, the *sharia*-clad feminist organizer, the following week in the suburban Jerusalem headquarters of the committee to which she belonged. But I was eager to stop by and say hello to the other members of her family. Her two sisters-in-law ushered us into their house. Amera, who before had taken me around the village, smiled broadly as she broke the news that the committee had managed to resume their sewing workshop with about a dozen women. Over coffee, she lamented that she still had not received permission to see her husband, a trade-union activist who had been expelled in the beginning of the *intifada.*

We walked across the yard to where Nahla and her husband, Yusef, were sitting in the shade with some people who looked like visitors from abroad. Head uncovered, and engaged in animated conversation, Nahla looked happier than when I had first met her. Although she was the only woman with whom I had conducted a much more intimate interview, she did not recognize me immediately. It was her husband, Yusef, who did, and he jumped up to shake my hand. "She stayed with us, don't you remember," he told her. Nahla probably had more contact than other village women with outsiders, but I still found it strange that she, above all, did not remember my visit. I wondered if she felt that she had exposed too much of herself in her interview.

Because Yusef, a devout Muslim, shook my hand without any hesitation, I was taken by surprise at another household when a young man withdrew his hand quickly as I extended mine. Incidents like these began to accumulate. The previous evening one of the three youths who had come to visit at Ali's was referred to as being "HAMAS" (the Islamic Resistance Movement). The following day Ali introduced me to members of a household who were Jihad activists.[1] Both the forty-five-year-old father, who

1. Islamic Jihad is loosely aligned with the Islamic Republic of Iran. In contrast to it and to HAMAS, it has not tried to impose strict Islamic practices on the population.

was accused of being the military leader of Jihad for the region, and his twenty-three-year-old son were in prison awaiting trial. They were charged with throwing a molotov cocktail on the settlement road, and their lawyer expected each of them to be sentenced to ten years in prison. The other nine members of the family who shared an eight-room house, were slated to be punished, too, when the building was demolished by the authorities. The wife pleaded with me to take photos of the house. By the time they received them in the mail, these were the only record the family had of the house.

I was not sure whether HAMAS and Jihad had gained more adherents in the village or whether our visits to people who were not secular activists was another sign of the greater unity in the village. When I questioned Ali about it, he explained that the Jihad was actually stronger before the war, but that they lost support when Iran failed to come to the aid of Iraq. There are two mosques in the village, one in the newer section and one in the ancient stone city down the hill. Jihad and HAMAS adherents went to either mosque, without distinction. One of the mosques also operated a kindergarten, the only one in the village other than the one run by a women's committee.

This conversation reminded me to question Ali about polygamy. In reply, he commented: "You know the man you met the other night, the employee of the cooperative who drives the truck? He has two wives." Ali related the story of the man's unhappy forced first marriage. After his children were grown, he took another wife of his own choosing, and his first wife left him and returned to her family. The traditional practice of almost obligatory marriage to first cousins is dying out, and more women and men are exercising their own choice. In the meantime, among those stuck with an unwanted spouse, polygyny seems to offer an escape—at least for men. I wondered what the cost was to women. Unfortunately, I never had the chance to ask.

The continued heavy curfew imposed on Ramallah and the early-morning raid and arrests in the village cast a shadow over Kufr Nameh. People were more on edge and kept scanning the road for signs of soldiers. I bolted awake at six in the morning, my heart beating rapidly in response to the heavy pounding on the front door. The children, sprawled on their mats in the hallway next to me, started crying. Amal tried to calm them while Ali went to the door. It was his sister-in-law, standing there with a dead chick in her hand. It was not the first one they had found, and she was concerned that they had been struck by some disease. Ali reassured her that he would contact the vet as soon as he could leave the village. I was

flabbergasted by her early-morning invasion. Maybe, I thought to myself, they have all developed a special sense and can tell when it is the soldiers. I had not and was seized by fear. While I feel the same visceral fear whenever I see soldiers or police amass anywhere, it was also a much more complex reaction. True, I was concerned that my presence might bring down retribution on my hosts. But I also believe that I had not totally stilled that little voice that I had heard since childhood, the one that warned me not to betray "my people." At some level, regardless of how righteous I felt, I was not fully prepared to be discovered there by other Jews.

The Ramallah–Kufr Nameh bus was not running, and very little outside traffic came through the village that day, only an occasional car returning workers from inside the Green Line. Even the medical team could not get through and the clinic had to suspend operation. There was no telling when the curfew in Ramallah would be lifted, and I began to worry that I would not be able to get a ride out the next day. We hailed one of the cars as it came back through the village with one lone passenger on his way to a village outside Jerusalem. I was sorry to beat such a hasty retreat, and I gave Amal a quick hug as I grabbed my things and rushed to the waiting car. I thought I would be coming back again and would give everyone a proper farewell.

But that was not to occur. The curfew in Ramallah was on again and off again over the next couple of weeks, and I was not able to make it back to Kufr Nameh. Nor did I reconnect with Nahla, who missed our appointment in Beit Hanina. I felt a sense of incompleteness, loss, and hoped that my abortive visit to Kufr Nameh would not be the last.

Issawiyeh: Winds of Change, II

It was well past midnight and I was dead tired, but it was hard to cut off the conversation with Rihab. I laughed as she described her encounter with the California life-style at a Beyond War conference in the Santa Cruz mountains. Other Palestinians had warned her to stock up on meat, that she most likely would not get any for several days. Michel, my Palestinian friend in Los Angeles, always teased me about the "cardboard food" I ate whenever I offered him a salad made with grains. The next minute, Rihab brought me close to tears as she talked about her long-standing relationship with Omar Qassem, the Palestinian political prisoner whose life was cut short two years earlier by his untimely death. At that time, when I first met Rihab Essawi, she had just returned from the United States, where she had completed her doctorate in educational psychology. We had hit it off immediately and had talked frankly then, as later, about the situation in Palestine.

The room in which we were sleeping had previously served as a tiny, dark kitchen, with a primitive bathroom in one corner. Hani and Ayda Essawi, Rihab's brother and his wife, had done a rather remarkable job of remodeling their sixty-year-old family house. Taking great pains to maintain and to highlight the stone walls, they had created a modern living space in the shell of the old. As I admired what they had accomplished, Ayda told me proudly how she had worked together with Hani to build the large addition.

I had been struck by the change in Ayda from the moment she had come to pick me up in East Jerusalem. I had first met her in January 1989,

when she directed us to the women's committee ceramic workshop in the village. At that time she spoke only rather halting English and seemed somewhat aloof. The following summer, when she served as my host in the village, she was more outgoing and had more confidence in her English. During the International Peace Initiative in December 1989 she was busy with foreign delegations and we had only had time to exchange a brief greeting. It had been winter then, and like the rest of us, she had been bundled in several layers of warm clothing, hardly a fashion plate.

When she met me in the lounge of the National Palace on my fourth trip, Ayda looked chic in her print outfit and carried herself with tremendous authority. Perhaps this was a result of her move into the position of director of the Women's Action Committee following a split in the original group. I followed her to a parked car, expecting to find Hani behind the wheel, as before. Instead, she unlocked the door and slipped into the driver's seat. She explained that during Hani's last administrative detention she had taken driving lessons and now shared the use of the car with him.

I was even less prepared for the change in Fadwa, who had accompanied Ayda, particularly her fluency in English. She had told me two years earlier that she would really like to learn English. Much to my amazement, with a three-month course at the British Consulate under her belt, she had become competent enough to act as my translator in the village the following day.

We exchanged news on the drive to Issawiyeh and over cool sodas at the Essawi house. They told me how frightening the opening days of the Gulf War had been and how everyone had been convinced that Israel would take the opportunity to launch an attack on the local Palestinian population. Turning to a lighter topic, Fadwa described how she had met her fiancé at a sit-in at the International Red Cross. She seemed as pleased with her ability to communicate her announcement in English as she was with the news itself.

When Hani joined us, our conversation turned to Baker's most recent visit. Ayda, Fadwa, and Hani—and later Rihab—were all pessimistic and echoed the sentiment I heard so often during my trip. "Now is a terrible time for the Palestinians." Like other intellectuals and Palestinian activists, the Essawis were very critical of the turn the *intifada* had taken, feeling that the shift away from mass mobilization reflected a failure of leadership. Their criticism of Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein contrasted with what I heard from the villagers the next day. There seemed to be a real gap between the assessments of political activists and the popular sentiment.

But regardless of their position, all had shared a fear of what they

initially felt was their impending death. It was for this reason, Ayda surmised, that so many women began to wear the *hijab.* Ayda and Fadwa, like so many feminists, were concerned about this phenomenon. Most of the men I talked with either denied the increased use of the *hijab* or shrugged it off as unimportant. For many women, however, it signaled backsliding, another sign—like the reports of a declining age of marriage for girls. Not all the changes that had occurred since my last trip were more restrictive, however. My conversations and interviews with many of the women of Issawiyeh the next day also signaled a continued broadening of women's options.

Before dark, Fadwa, Ayda, and I walked into the heart of the village to visit Fadwa's family. Issawiyeh did not look much different than I remembered, and political graffiti still abounded. As the news of my arrival spread through the sprawling house, family members whom I had met before came to welcome me. Fadwa's older sister was eager to show off her new baby. Her younger sister, red-headed, freckle-faced Siham, was more restrained and looked sullen. The only time she smiled during my visit was when she was playing with her daughter. I understood why she appeared so sad when I heard how her carefully laid plans had gone awry.

Two years earlier, when I had interviewed her, Siham had been on six months maternity leave from the ceramic workshop. Despite her in-laws' disapproval, she had been planning to return to work and had been optimistic about the future. Siham had told me then how her added income from the workshop was going to make it possible for her and her husband to establish their own household. She had been looking forward to their being able to live in a more egalitarian fashion, to his sharing domestic responsibilities with her.

Instead, shortly after this conversation, her husband had left for the United States to seek work, and she was trapped in her in-laws' household, under their control. They had refused to let her return to work, and even after she had moved back into her mother's home, she had not been willing to challenge her in-laws' moral authority over her. She had dropped out of the workshop and had become less active in the women's committee. Now, living in a household with an abundance of women's hands to run domestic affairs, she found herself with little to do. There was a hint of resignation as she pointed to a ribboned tissue-box cover as an example of how she passed her time—so different from the ebullience two years ago when she had showed me the ceramic plaques from the workshop that she had made. A tone of desperation crept into her voice when she told me that she had not heard from her husband for more than six months. She did not say it, but

I sense that Siham wondered, as I did, whether she was going to be abandoned while her husband sought a new life outside.

Fadwa, on the other hand, was carefully pursuing plans for a future that she had plotted two years earlier, trying to exercise whatever control over her life she could under the conditions of occupation. When I had interviewed her before, she had told me emphatically that she would not marry just anyone, that her husband would have to be someone who supported both her continued involvement in the women's committee and her work.

Perhaps her sister's experience contributed to Fadwa's insistence that after their marriage she and her fiancé live in their own apartment in Issawiyeh, rather than following the traditional pattern of moving into her husband's family home in his village. This solution meant that she could be close to the workshop and to her political and social base. She and her fiancé had rented an apartment in preparation for their imminent marriage, and they were pooling their income to buy furniture.

Two years earlier, politically active youth had talked about delaying marriage because of the *intifada,* but it seemed that now everyone was settling in for the long haul and trying to establish some semblance of "normalcy." Khawla, another one of the members of the ceramic workshop, had already married and only eight days before had given birth to a son. She looked different because of the weight she had gained during her pregnancy.

As she nursed the baby and basked in the attention heaped on new mothers, she told me definitively that she was returning to work. Sitting on the bed in the room that she and her husband occupied in her in-laws' home, she pointedly remarked that she would not fall into the same trap as Siham, that, indeed, her leave from work was only temporary. Khadija, the supervisor of the workshop and one of the first women's committee activists in the village, had joined us and nodded her head vigorously in agreement. Khadija's mother, who was also Khawla's mother-in-law, was going to watch the baby. Khadija earnestly explained that they could not let Khawla bring the baby to the workshop because of the chemicals, but that they would support the new mother in every way they could.

Because she was one of the early members of the workshop, Khawla's place was being saved for her, despite the cutbacks. Like all the economic institutions in Occupied Palestine, in the aftermath of the Gulf War, the ceramic workshop was suffering from a slump in sales. With greatly reduced incomes people were living at a minimum subsistence level. They could barely afford the necessities, let alone decorations like the ceramic plaques and brass frames that the workshop produced. Also, beginning with Iraq's

invasion of Kuwait, fewer international delegations had been visiting, further diminishing the sales of their products. To keep the workshop going and to help spread the work, the four remaining members had each cut back their own hours and income.

When I visited the workshop the next afternoon, Khadija had gone on business to the committee's center and Fadwa seemed to be in charge. One of the workers who had been new two years ago still declined to be interviewed. Her modesty was underscored by the *hijab* and long-sleeved outfit she wore. Aisha, on the other hand, asked to be interviewed after I recorded Fadwa. Aisha's facility with English was poorer than Fadwa's, although they had taken the same course. Nevertheless, she began the interview in English, but after repeatedly turning to Fadwa for assistance, she switched to Arabic in frustration. Her admiration for Fadwa mirrored Fadwa's own relationship with Ayda, whom she held up as a role model. In turn, Fadwa—particularly as a result of how she and her fiancé were planning their lives—had become a model for the next "generation" of workshop members and committee activists.

It was hard to believe that it was only five years before Fadwa was first permitted to become involved in activities outside the home. Even that preliminary step had required her father's and older brother's permission, which had been gained only as a result of her mother's active intervention. The *intifada,* of course, had helped considerably to push things along.

Women like Fadwa and Ayda had been transformed not only by their participation in the *intifada,* but by the ideas and the social support promoted by their women's committee. They were fashioning themselves as "new women," even before national independence was achieved. And they were able to redefine the course of their lives with the cooperation and support of the "new men" that they and the *intifada* were helping to nurture. I had seen an example of the change in men's behavior earlier that morning when I had watched Hani prepare his sons for school.

I joined Ayda at the committee's headquarters in Beit Hanina later, and we alternated between talking about the new plans for the committee and discussing some of the changes in her own life. The baby-food cooperative, which had recently developed a new, nutritionally sound powdered food, was ready to go into full-scale production. They had designed a box in which to package the food, were going to purchase a plastic sealing machine, and were paving the way for distribution in food markets and to UNRWA. At a cost of 3.5 shekels (about $1.75) for twenty meals, compared to almost $5 for only five meals of Cerealic formula, Ayda was convinced that they would be successful enough to start another operation in Gaza.

Ayda's optimism about the work of the committee and their creativity in developing new projects for women was matched by the delight she took in the changes in her own life. It was not just that she was now in a leadership position in the committee and had greatly expanded the range of her own skills, nor that her material conditions had been greatly improved. Her relationship with Hani and the equality between them had been strengthened, a development Ayda attributed to their working together on the renovation of their house, doing everything from laying floors to painting.

While this explanation made sense, so did her theory that men who served time in prison were better able to function in egalitarian relationships with women. After all, Ayda told me, they had not been pampered and were used to taking care of themselves. We laughed together as we speculated that perhaps the Israelis, with their eventual detention of most young men, were helping to create the new Palestinian man.

"They're Swimming in Gaza"

The people who filled the Mercedes *servis* heading for Gaza were an odd assortment. An older man wearing a white *hatta* (head-dress) sat silently in the passenger seat next to the driver; the middle row was shared by a young Asian man, who was quite obviously a tourist, and a Westernized young Palestinian man and woman who sounded like lawyers; to my right in the back seat was a woman in her fifties wearing a dark blue dress and a head scarf.

From the moment we left the unpaved lot that served as the *servis* station in Jerusalem, the young tourist alternately cleaned his camera and pored over his maps. Occasionally during the ride across Green Line Israel he asked a question, trying to follow our route on his map. He seemed like a true innocent, a person simply following his Japanese guide book to Israel with little comprehension of the Palestinian situation. I was baffled by him and also concerned for his safety. Except for his occasional queries, to which the lawyer-types responded politely, no one conversed all the way to the Erez checkpoint into Gaza. Although I was sure that all three passengers in the middle seat spoke English, I observed the usual etiquette and restrained my curiosity about them.

It was only when the soldiers at the Gaza entry checkpoint signaled the vehicle to pull off to the side that any sense of commonality surfaced. I moaned, uttering aloud that I hoped they would not prevent me from entering Gaza. I sucked in my breath and returned the soldier's gaze, all the while keeping my passport out of sight. I knew better than to volunteer information. One of the soldiers poked his head into the window, threw a

cursory glance at the rest of us, and asked only the Japanese youth for identification. I do not know what the soldier was expecting, but he seemed surprised by the Kanji lettering on the outside of the passport. He went off to check with his superiors and returned almost immediately with the red passport, which he handed back wordlessly to the youth.

I was convinced that the young tourist was still oblivious to the significance of that checkpoint, but the momentary anxiety that the rest of us shared broke the ice a little bit. The young Palestinian man asked the Japanese youth where he was going. When he responded that he was just going to tour Gaza for the day, my concern mounted and I asked if anyone was meeting him, if he knew anyone. When he told us that he was on his own, I could not help becoming protective and warned him to be careful with his camera. The woman lawyer-type seemed to share my concern for his safety, but her male colleague snorted that the youth would be perfectly all right. After all, he did not look Israeli. Feeling that I was being reproached for implying that there was any question of safety, I became defensive and felt compelled to clarify that I was concerned about the danger from the soldiers, not the Palestinians. There was no question that the situation in Gaza was very tense, but not wanting to become embroiled further in a dispute, I changed the subject and asked directions to the YMCA. The woman next to me tugged at my sleeve, pointing to herself, nodding. Not having a knack with languages, I had come to rely on these nonverbal cues and deduced that she was going to take charge of me.

Her generous offer was reassuring, but I was still a bit apprehensive. This was the first time I had come to Gaza completely on my own. Although arrangements for my visit had been made, I had never met the young man who was going to serve as my guide. I also was not sure that Suhara had been informed about my desire to stay over in Jabalya Camp. Putting my worries aside, I settled back and observed the busy life on the street as we inched our way through the throngs.

In my previous two trips to Gaza, the streets of Gaza City had been almost deserted. Now, two years later, the narrow streets were bustling with activity, slowing traffic to a snail's pace and fostering the impression of normalcy, just as in Jerusalem. Although two years ago I had noticed a mix of women with bare and covered heads, now *all* the women were wearing the *hijab* and long sleeves, despite the heat. Many were also in ankle-length dresses like the ones that filled the merchants' racks on the sidewalk.

When the *servis* finally arrived at the station, the woman in blue led me by the hand to a taxi that was trapped in the snarled traffic. After she established his route, she signaled me to enter. The searing rays of the sun

made for oven-like conditions inside the stalled vehicles, and tempers began to fray. Although there was no way to break the gridlock, car horns started to blare.

In the midst of this noise and confusion we could make out the sound of shots being fired. Our driver, already agitated by the traffic congestion, jumped out of the taxi and surveyed the scene behind us. Following his gaze, I noticed the soldiers on a rooftop monitoring the crowded streets below. I could not tell whether or not the plastic visors on their helmets were pulled down over their faces, so it was hard to judge whether they were about to rain tear gas down on the crowds. In any event, the constant backward glances of our driver increased my anxiety. My blue-dressed chaperone sat there implacably, however, patiently waiting for traffic to move so that we could reach our respective destinations.

She refused to let me pay my portion of the taxi fare when we pulled up in front of the YMCA. I thanked her warmly and entered the large, semideserted building. The only sign of life was a cluster of men talking over coffee at a round brass table in the cavernous lounge. The executive secretary of the Y, Ais, invited me to join them for coffee, and while I waited for my guide, Ais filled me in on life in Gaza.

As the head of a major social service agency, Ais had been in the thick of things all during the war and had been a keen observer of the situation. He recounted how very frightened people had been during the first three days of the war. The heavy tanks rolling down the streets had convinced them that a massacre was imminent. When nothing had happened, they had lowered their guard, but the forty-day curfew had taken its toll. About ten thousand farmers had been given permission to go to their fields, but the only relief for the women had been the two hours a week they had been permitted to go out for food.

The YMCA had distributed boxes of fifteen items each to over one thousand households, enough to sustain a family of five for one month: rice, sugar, tea, milk, beans, olive oil, canned meat, and vegetables. But this had merely scratched the surface, helping only the most needy. Ais recounted seeing women rummaging in the streets for food as the curfew wore on. And despite the permission given to some farmers to tend to their fields, most had lost their crops, just as the farmers in the West Bank and in the Jordan Valley had.

The immediate hardships experienced during the war had abated, but the long term effects continued to be felt. Yet, the mood in Gaza, too, seemed less volatile than on my previous visits. I had heard it rumored that people in Gaza were going to the beach again—the first time since the

beginning of the *intifada.* Ais was not critical of this renewed practice, but he seemed to be on the defensive. "Why not?" he responded to my query. "People are unemployed, why not go to the beach and enjoy themselves?"

The notion of bathers romping in the Mediterranean was far removed from my memory of the deserted seacoast in Gaza City. I had first seen the coastline in the winter of 1988 from the balcony of The Love Boat restaurant, where one of the local PLO figures in Gaza had hosted us. The only people on the beach then were a few fishermen scraping the barnacles from the bottoms of their large rowboats. The next summer, in 1989, the beach was still deserted. Peering out at the Mediterranean from the narrow lanes of Shati (Beach) Refugee Camp, I had spotted only a young boy on horseback and a few children playing at the water's edge.

What did it mean that people were going to the beach again? When Hassan, the young reporter who was acting as my guide that day, finally joined us, I asked his assessment. "People are tired, hopeful that something will break," he told me. Knowing my particular interest in women, he hastened to add that the women were wearing the *hijab* to go into the water at the beach. A second communiqué from the UNLU (Unified National Leadership of the Uprising) three months earlier condemning efforts to coerce women to wear the *hijab* apparently had little impact in Gaza. "How can it," he asked with disdain, "if Fateh is going along with it?" As Suhara confirmed later, it was difficult for the women's committees to stand virtually alone in challenging the pressure.

As I suspected, no one had told Suhara that I would be coming to Gaza. But she recognized me immediately when we walked into the kindergarten in Gaza City where she was attending a meeting. It had been two years since I had last seen her, and except for an English-language cassette tape I had sent to her via a friend, we had not corresponded in the interim. After the staff showed me around the Hadanat Ghassan Khanafani (kindergarten), we made arrangements with Suhara to meet her later at her home in Jabalya Camp. Until then the young journalist took me on a political tour of Gaza.

The streets were no longer the site of continuous daily battle with the occupiers. In the Gaza Strip most of the public confrontations were being waged at Rafah, on the southern border. I wondered about the vitality of the alternative institutions that were at the heart of the *intifada:* were they casualties of the Gulf War and of the shifting *intifada* strategy? I had heard rumors that many of the agricultural projects had folded, that in the haste to establish them cows had been purchased that were not milk cows, that

the goats were the wrong kind, and that the long curfews during the war had dealt these projects a fatal blow.

"No, not at all," the Egyptian-trained agricultural engineer told me, as we drove to one of the plots on the outskirts of Gaza City. Joining the agricultural committee after his release from prison, along with three other agricultural engineers, he was part of a seven-person staff of the Union of Agricultural Work Committees in Gaza. The interior of the two-*dunum* (1/2-acre) hothouse where we first stopped looked like a huge abstract sculpture, with the dying tentacles of the recently harvested cucumbers clinging to thin wires suspended from the roof. Although the large garden plot had dried up for lack of irrigation during the long Gulf War curfew, they had managed to revive it and had just finished harvesting a new crop of cucumbers and melons. Fifteen households whose family heads had been killed were the beneficiaries, along with the members of the cooperative who bought the remainder at low cost. The employees of the cooperative were preparing the ground for new crops, and I could see the first shoots of parsley breaking through the soil.

The chicken hatcheries had not survived the extended curfew either, but they were being readied to bring in a new batch of chicks. Across the long dusty lot from the hatchery building, where we next stopped, two lone cows lay sleepily in a shaded pen. The cooperative workers denied it vigorously, but I could not help wondering if, as in Kufr Nameh, they were not the remnants of the ill-fated milk production fiasco about which I had heard. The disastrous state of the honey production was less a casualty of the war than of a disease, they told me. It had hit the entire region, including Israel.

This little tour convinced me that the agricultural cooperatives, at least, had survived or had been resurrected since the Gulf War. The next day, when I visited the clinic in Jabalya Camp, I was reassured that the medical institutions that were such a basic part of the *intifada* were also alive and well. The Jabalya Camp clinic alone served two thousand patients a month, and there was talk of making it into a medical center. The dermatologist who was staffing the Jabalya clinic told me that the medical committee had also been developing plans to build a hospital in Rafah. In the same vein of optimism and renewal, the agricultural committee in Rafah, she told me, had purchased a tractor that was rented out to local farmers at two-thirds the price charged by private firms.

When we arrived at Suhara's home in Jabalya, the women in her family all gathered to greet me. Their numbers had increased with Halima's

marriage to Suhara's brother. While two years before she had been a constant visitor in her cousin and fiancé's household, she had now become a permanent member, along with her one-year-old son, the only child in the household. The burden of reproducing the next generation seems to have fallen to Halima. The eldest son and his wife cannot have children; the middle daughter, well into her thirties, seems to have no prospects of marriage; and Suhara cannot have children either, as a result of an operation she had when she was eighteen.

Perhaps because I was a return visitor, I was less the center of attention than during my previous stay, and I was able just to sit around and to be more observant. The shifts in the mood of the *intifada* could almost be charted in this household, as well as both the transformation of women's role and the stubborn residue of classical male privilege.

Suhara's English had improved considerably, and we could converse freely, albeit simply, with no interpreter. With increased conversation her facility improved, and with few misunderstandings we were able to progress beyond monosyllabic exchanges. She carried herself with more authority than I remembered, and her political involvement seemed to exempt her from following the commands of her middle brother, Farid. His wife, Halima, and his older sister seemed to be at his beck and call as he issued orders from the bedroom, where he was lounging after returning from work.

Halima, the shy, smiling young woman I remembered from two years before, seemed to pout a lot and to be perpetually unhappy. The only time she had other than a dour expression was when her baby demonstrated his agility and his precociousness. We could not help laughing as he grabbed the remote control for the television set and played with it, looking up at the screen in anticipation of the results. Each time he was rewarded with the abrupt shift in images, he clapped his hands and gurgled with excitement. He was the darling of the household and seemed to be the only bright spot in Halima's life.

I had walked openly and without hesitation through the camp with my guide on our arrival, in sharp contrast to the necessity of racing cautiously down the narrow lanes on previous visits. Although no soldiers seemed to be in sight, I noticed a wariness. Sure enough, as Suhara and I sat conversing, with the television playing in the background, she jumped up suddenly to turn down the volume. "Listen," she announced. "Soldiers." I heard nothing but trusted her instincts. Her house was only about one hundred yards from the major thoroughfare of the marketplace, and she seemed to be attuned to every little sound. Later, we heard a report that when Israeli soldiers had dismounted from their jeeps they been driven

back by *shabab* who rained stones on them. Instead of retaliating with a tear gas attack or with clamping curfew on the camp, the soldiers had beat a hasty retreat and had not returned. The incident did not faze the residents, whereas two years ago they would have steeled themselves for the worst and certainly would have heeded the usual evening curfew.

Indeed, whereas two years ago I had been secreted out of the camp before the nightly curfew fell, no precautions at all were taken as the 8:00 P.M. curfew rolled around. The entire community seemed to be out in the narrow lanes, visiting and catching the light evening breeze as dusk fell. We did not take much care as Suhara and I walked openly to visit with a neighbor, a young couple from Deir Ballah camp who had brought their one-month-old baby to show off to its grandmother. On my last visit we had systematically stopped at the homes of several mothers of slain or injured youths. This time we seemed to be celebrating life, not death.

The husband of Suhara's friend spoke a little English, and we engaged in a halting political conversation. He was eager to learn what changes I observed since my last visit. Much to my amazement, Suhara agreed with me totally when I criticized the leadership for failing to provide enough support for the agenda of the women's committees. Like so many of the other young men who were political activists, the young father paid lip service to the simultaneous movements for national self-determination and women's rights. Furthermore, the way he cradled the baby and related to his wife made me feel that his words were more than hollow rhetoric. What a contrast he presented to the scene I observed several hours later in Suhara's house. Her brother barked orders to his unmarried sister to bring the heavy television set from the room where we had been watching it earlier to a position in the courtyard where he could see it while lying prone on the bed.

Returning to Suhara's house, we joined the rest of the family, who were lounging outside in the narrow lane. Suhara lamented the death of her two grandmothers during the Gulf War. On each occasion the soldiers had refused to give the family more than two hours for the burial. "But the worst thing," she told me, "was when they dumped the flour!" The wake-like celebration that is traditionally held on the third day after a death had been disrupted by the soldiers. They had caught the women who were bringing flour for the celebration and had dumped it all on the ground.

Our conversation was interrupted briefly by the arrival of Farid, whose instructions seemed to mobilize the entire household. In a burst of activity a relay line was formed and flagstones were carted from the street, where the truck had delivered them, the hundred feet or so down the lane to the little storage shed across from the family's house. The same building

activity I had observed in West Bank villages was underway in Gaza, and it confounded me. The little family store where Suhara and I had stopped for an ice cream earlier was being expanded, and a small cafe was going to be built onto it. I noticed that improvements had been made in the family house, too, and a washing area, new toilet, and shower had been installed. Above this a little roof "den" had been built. It was there that Suhara and her friends had spent much time during the Gulf War curfew—when she was not violating the curfew and stealing into Gaza City and Shati (Beach) Camp to do committee work.

With the job of transporting the stones accomplished, we all went into the house, and in a flurry of activity the women distributed themselves to different corners and began to prepare the evening meal. Halima worked over an electric frying pan in one room, Suhara and her sister disappeared into the kitchen, where they pared vegetables, and the eldest sister went to work over a small gas burner that she set up on the concrete patio floor. Their mother sat down with the men on mats arrayed on the patio, having first directed her eldest daughter to bring out the circulating fan and point it at the rocker/crib where the baby was sleeping. The eldest son, an amiable, patient man, assisted the women voluntarily by watching the baby, who by then had crawled out of his crib, and by helping to keep the little gas burner going. The youngest son, on the other hand, acceded only scornfully when one of his sisters handed him the potato peeler and a bowl of potatoes.

It was almost ten o'clock by the time Suhara spread the large plastic cover on the ground and the women laid out the spread of food and seated themselves on the additional mats they had carried out. The meal over, cleanup—as I noted in most villages and refugee camp houses—consisted of dumping the scraps off the cloth onto the ground. The neat little mound into which they were swept would be dispensed with in the morning, when the women set about the daily task of sweeping and washing all the floors. As I watched otherwise politically conscious men flick their cigarette ashes on the floors of their homes or dump the shells of sunflower seeds, I could not help thinking that perhaps the women would not have to sweep and wash the floors daily if these habits were changed. It also reminded me that, despite all the changes that had been occurring in women's position, old attitudes and practices died hard.

Pulling the mats from the patio into one of the four rooms, Suhara, her sister, her sister-in-law, and I all prepared for bed. Halima and the baby would share the room with us. I assumed it was to protect the sleep of Farid, who had to rise before dawn to leave for his job in Israel. Having shared rooms often enough with the children and women of the households where

I stayed, I was accustomed to the breathing, snoring, and even whimpering of the other occupants. Still, every time the baby woke up crying, I stirred, agitated less by his sounds than by Farid's shouts to quiet him.

Perhaps I was being too harsh on Farid, I thought, as I heard his mother rise at 4:00 A.M. to prepare to send him off to work. I did not remember the family pampering him like this before. Then again, perhaps I was less critical before, ignoring the negative side and seeing only the positive. It was not just that he was carrying the burden of raising money for his younger brother's wedding; it was also the humiliating treatment by Israeli employers that he had to face daily—something that few residents of Jabalya would have considered two years earlier. Then, weddings were postponed, or the expenses for them were greatly reduced.

Thinking about this in my dreamy haze, I fell back to sleep as soon as Suhara's mother turned the lights off and went back to bed. Three hours later, noise could be heard coming from every quarter of the camp, and the rest of the household arose. The women went about the daily cleanup chores wordlessly, with a division of labor that was clear and a rhythm that was the product of long practice. Since they would not let me participate in their well-established routine, I walked down the lane to the street, where the camp was coming to life. I could see a mass of white scarves bobbing down the block toward the market. Just off the lane, on the main street, some men were pushing a wheelbarrow of concrete, while others waited for them, preparing to lay the concrete-block foundation of a new building. Later, when Suhara took me up to the roof hutch that the family had put together during the Gulf War, I noticed construction going on in several nearby buildings, more renewal.

By mid-morning the women completed their chores, and Suhara's mother stretched out her legs and leaned against the wall on the patio to rest. When I focused my camera to take a photo of her, she beckoned one of her daughters to bring her scarf, rearranged herself in a studied pose, and then gave me the signal to shoot.

Suhara and I returned to Gaza later in the morning to find it as mobbed as when I had arrived the previous day. It was a very ordinary day, with no soldiers in sight. If I had not known better, I would have thought that there was a mutual agreement to back off. Whatever the dynamics, it was obvious that even in Gaza—and in Jabalya, where the *intifada* had begun—the mood had changed.

As we embraced and said good-bye at the *servis* station, Suhara and I both choked up. I am not sure what she was thinking, but my own thoughts were rather pessimistic, and I wondered what was in store for her and others now that the momentum of the *intifada* seemed to have slowed. I

seated myself next to an open window to catch whatever breeze I could as I waited for the car to fill up and depart. I thought of how Suhara had more explicitly embraced feminist goals, or at least had become more willing to admit to having them; of how much new building there was in Jabalya; of how necessity had reduced the onus of working inside the Green Line; of the disappearance of the women's center.

I had been so engrossed in the family relationships and in Suhara's own changes that I had not considered the full implications of the closing of the women's center. The most visible sign of the women's committee in the camp was gone, and so, too, was the daily interaction, discussion, and planning—the free space women had created. In the West Bank villages of Kufr Nameh and Issawiyeh, the women's committees had taken firm root, and though their activities were shifting, there was a core group of young activists that was being replenished. But in Jabalya, Suhara seemed to be a lone voice.

Lost in thought, I was surprised when Suhara appeared suddenly at the window of the *servis* and deeply moved when she handed me a gold friendship ring. As her figure receded in the distance and she was engulfed by the crowds, I was overtaken by a sudden sadness. I wondered if I would ever see her again, ever return to Gaza.

Division and Disarray inside the Green Line

From the moment I saw Rabbi Moshe Hirsch at the offices of *Al-Fajr English Weekly* in the summer of 1989, I had been intrigued. His remark then to the Palestinian staff had stayed with me: "I think we Neturei Karta are the ones who can build the bridges." I had met secular Jewish Israelis who were also bridge-builders, but he was the first orthodox Jew I had met who was anti-Zionist—and a self-identified Palestinian.

The rabbi, a familiar figure in East Jerusalem, entered the offices of *Al-Fajr,* where we had arranged to meet, wearing a *yarmulke,* having already removed his black velvet hat. Despite the hot summer day he was wearing a long black frock coat, under which I could see the fringe of his *tzitzis* peeking out.[1] Deciding to play it safe, I did not extend my hand as we introduced ourselves—behavior that he later confirmed was appropriate, commenting, "Of course, you would know, the daughter of a rabbi." His expression and voice were rather sweet and gentle, a demeanor emphasized further by his fluffy, completely white beard.

Known among Palestinians as the foreign minister of Neturei Karta, Rabbi Hirsch was open and friendly and more than happy to talk about the ideology of his group. Taking great pains to avoid using the word Israel, he told me that he emigrated to the "Holy Land" from the United States in 1955 at the age of 24. The Neturei Karta have been characterized by others as Messianic Jews, though Rabbi Hirsch eschewed the label. Nevertheless, the group's anti-Zionist stance is based on a belief "that the present

1. The traditional skull cap worn by men was referred to as a *yarmulke* among Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe. In Israel, the midget version of it is called a *kippa.* The *tzitzis* is a vest-like undershirt worn by orthodox men, the fringe of which is usually visible.

occupation of the territories, both East and West Palestine, is an act of rebellion against G——d . . . [who] charged the Jewish nation with a Divine oath not to attempt to regain possession of the Holy Land and rule it against the wishes of the indigenous residents of the Land."

The Neturei Karta consider themselves Palestinians and had stated to former secretary of state Baker their desire "to become an integral part of the State of Palestine." In turn, the Palestinians have embraced them, and a member of Neturei Karta was appointed to the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks. Yasir Arafat has already announced that Rabbi Hirsch will be made the minister of Jewish affairs in a future Palestinian state. The Palestinian staff of *Al-Fajr* referred to him by this title.

The attire of the Neturei Karta clearly marks them as orthodox Jews, and I wondered how freely they were able to move about Palestinian neighborhoods. "Are you at all concerned?" I asked the rabbi, "that you might be mistaken for an orthodox Zionist?" He explained that he is known, and that the Palestinians are aware that his group has contributed to hospitals.

Throughout the hour-long interview, during which he explained his group's ideology and position, Rabbi Hirsch was aware of the tape recorder, and several times inquired to make sure his voice was being picked up. When I asked if I could photograph him, he readied himself by twisting some locks of hair and pulling them behind his ear. Though modest, like the Palestinian national leaders with whom I have met, he has a highly developed sense of his historical role and importance. And like them, he has a political line to deliver and is unwilling to deviate much from it and to be too self-revealing.

Before going off to visit with Hanna Siniora, the editor of *Al-Fajr,* Rabbi Hirsch handed me a copy of the letter that he had presented to Baker earlier. In it the Neturei Karta praised Baker for his efforts and asked that they "be placed under the rule of a government chosen by the indigenous population of Palestine."

The Israeli secular peace activists I know also are outspoken critics of the Israeli government and strong advocates of Palestinian self-determination. As marginal as they might be to their own society, however, they are still Israelis. And while the Neturei Karta had not wavered in its stand with the Palestinians during the Gulf War, I knew that the relationships between Israeli peace activists and Palestinians had been torn asunder.

Regardless of what individual stand an Israeli might have taken on the war, when it came down to their material circumstances, the chasm

between occupied and occupier was again exposed. In preparation for possible chemical warfare the Israeli government had issued gas masks to all its citizens, including the Jewish settlers in the West Bank and Gaza. Except for the residents of East Jerusalem, none were issued originally to the Palestinians in those areas. The hue and cry that went up over this blatant, potentially fatal discrimination forced the Israelis to issue masks at least to some of the Palestinians under their control. But the supplies were inadequate to meet the demand, and the masks that finally were issued to only 10 percent of the Palestinians were outdated and defective.

Yvonne Deutsch, my friend from the Women in Black group, was three months pregnant when the U.S. bombing of Iraq began. Her partner, Andre, was in the throes of a massive remodeling of their house at the time and had to work desperately fast to be able to complete a room to which a door could be mounted. Initially, when the sirens had sounded, the family had gone to the room, and in spite of their skepticism they had donned the gas masks. However, after the army public relations man had announced on the radio that parents should not force their children to put on the masks, five-year-old Tamr had refused. The adults had followed suit.

Yvonne had felt guilty that she had had the choice to wear or not wear a mask, to go out or not, while the Palestinians had been forced to stay in under a forty-day curfew without protective masks. She sardonically dubbed her experience as "deluxe." Friends had come from Haifa with their child, and later her mother also had joined the household. Filled with fear and confusion, the two young couples had played out their emotions in a surreal imitation of what Yvonne referred to as "thirtyplus" (a reference to the American television program about yuppies, "thirtysomething"). The men had gone out to shop, and the women had baked, made jams, and cooked gourmet meals.

"Everyone turned inward," she told me. For instance, it was not that Women in Black had made an active decision to stop their weekly demonstrations; it was just that nobody had shown up. The first Friday after the beginning of the war, only two or three people came, and when no one else appeared they had left. Some activists criticized the cocoon-like behavior of most of the peace movement, suggesting that these erstwhile critics were only too happy to be returned to the fold of Israeli society, to be sharing the same experience with their fellow citizens from whom they usually felt so alienated.

Women in Black in Jerusalem, at least, had succumbed only temporarily. Feeling the need to talk with each other, to be with each other, they had called a meeting after three weeks. Some members, like Yvonne, had been opposed to the war; others had supported it; and still others had not

been sure of their position. Regardless of their attitude toward the war, they all had remained firm in their opposition to Israeli Occupation. After a long, tearful discussion, which had included arguments that the timing was wrong and that it might backfire on them, the women had agreed to resume their weekly demonstration. On February 8, almost three weeks before the war ended, the women (though in greatly reduced numbers) had returned to their little island on Paris Square. Much to their surprise the reaction had been no more hostile than usual.

The confusion and disarray in the peace movement had widened the gulf between the Palestinians and their Israeli supporters. This had not been helped, of course, by the stories of Palestinians cheering from their rooftops when the SCUD missiles were lobbed into Israel. She could empathize with these spontaneous outbursts, Yvonne told me, but still it was hard not to feel let down.

In reality, the relationship that had been fostered between several Israeli and Palestinian women's groups had been fractured before the war had begun. After the success of the 1989 women's conference, plans had been made for another year-end conference in Jerusalem and a march. There had also been talk of convening an international conference in Geneva where Palestinian women from Tunis would meet with the Israeli women. Women from NET (Network), an Israeli establishment group, had joined with the more radical Women's Peace Coalition and the Palestinian women's groups in the planning. Months of preparatory meetings had already taken place prior to the war. Things had begun to break down after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, particularly as many Israeli peace activists succumbed to anti-Palestinian rhetoric.

The final straw had come after the government had denied a permit for a march and turned down their appeal. Wanting a public show of solidarity, the Palestinian women had expected the Israeli women to go ahead with the march. For their part, the Israeli women had been afraid they would lose their larger constituency and that only the more radical women would participate if they went ahead with an illegal march. Instead, they had held a conference in West Jerusalem, attended by about four hundred Israelis and not more than five Palestinian guests. About a week later, a group of approximately fifty Israeli and Palestinian women had conducted a small march to the U.S. consulate in East Jerusalem, where they had delivered a letter.[2] This token demonstration had neither healed the wounds nor

2. If a demonstration does not exceed 50, a permit is not necessary—provided, of course, that you are Israelis or Americans. A group of more than 10 Palestinians is de facto illegal.

rebuilt the fragile trust that had taken so long to build.[3] The Palestinian women had felt betrayed by the unwillingness of the Israeli women to stand together with them against the repressiveness of the Israeli government, and the Israeli women had felt trapped between their desire to show solidarity with the Palestinians and their concern about becoming alienated from the rest of the Israeli peace movement.

These reversals were at odds with the kind of optimism that both Yvonne and Rayna Moss, a longtime activist from Tel Aviv, had felt just one year earlier. Tending to her six-month-old baby, Rayna joked, "You see, a year ago we were so optimistic we all began to have babies."

The low coffee table at Rayna's was cluttered with copies of *Challenge,* the magazine of the independent Israeli left, fliers announcing a solidarity demonstration in and bus caravans to Carmiel-Ramyah, and pacifiers for the baby. Most of Rayna's energy was being consumed trying to mobilize people once again to protest the unabated building of settlements in the Occupied Territories. But a problem closer to home was rearing its ugly head: the seizure of lands and the removal of Palestinian citizens of Israel from the Galilee.[4] The attempt to forcibly resettle the seventeen Bedouin families of Ramyah was part of the government's plan to "Judaize" the Galilee.

Ironically, this action by the Israeli government so outraged Israeli peace activists that it may have helped breathe new life into an opposition camp that had been thrown into disarray as a result of the Gulf War. Responses to the war had ranged from Citizen Rights Knesset member Yossi Sarid (who told the Palestinians not to bother to call him), to the initial cessation of the Women in Black weekly vigils, to former Communist party leader Emile Habiby's support for American intervention. The division engendered by these differences had immobilized the peace movement.

With her characteristic sense of the absurd and marvelous story-telling ability, Rayna shifted from the litany of woes that had befallen the peace movement to an account of the opening days of the Gulf War. Awakened by a siren at 3:00 A.M., which was followed by the sound of a nearby explosion,

3. Six months later, in May 1991, an international women's peace treaty conference was held in Geneva.

4. This was not the first time since 1948 that the government had seized their lands. Every year on March 30, Land Day, the massive 1976 seizure of Palestinian lands inside the Green Line is commemorated. What have been relatively isolated events since then are becoming more common as the government moves entire communities of its Palestinian citizens, the Israeli Arabs, to make room instead for its Jewish citizens.

she and her spouse, Petar, had turned on the radio. They had become suspicious on discovering that all the stations were playing the same music. The first solid information they had received was from a friend in the United States who had called after seeing a CNN report about the attack on Tel Aviv. "In fact," Rayna laughingly told me, "a woman living where the CNN crew was set up came to be known as Mrs. CNN, and everyone turned to her for information."

Within a few minutes of the first siren blast there was a knock at the door. Looking through the peephole, Rayna had seen a group of people who had looked to her like monsters from outerspace. Petar had thought maybe they were people caught out on the street, but from the beard and hat visible around the outer edges of the gas mask of one of them, Rayna had recognized the orthodox neighbors who lived below them. Before she could open the door all the way, the man had barged in, demanding to know where their sealed room was. Waving his wife and children into the bedroom, the family head had marched into the bathroom, where he had seated himself in the under-sized bathtub.[5] Rayna and Petar had not prepared any sealed room initially, but had relented when his father had railed at them for being so reckless. After all, she had been eight months pregnant. Calculating that they would not have to be inside the sealed room for more than thirty to forty minutes, they had decided that it was easiest to prepare the tiny bathroom, which had just enough space for the two of them.

Rayna and Petar had been able finally to get rid of their uninvited guests after an hour, during which time the wife had been struggling with the children in the unsealed bedroom. Free of them, Rayna and Petar had parked themselves in front of the radio in their living room, trying to decide what to do. Since she had planned on delivering the baby in Jerusalem, in any event, it had made sense to go there and stay with friends. With the first morning light, the phone had begun to ring: Palestinian friends in East Jerusalem calling to check up on them.

Rayna's sense of humor masked her depression about the sad state of the Israeli peace movement. The fragility of people's commitment to the Palestinian cause angered her but was not a big shock. What did take her by surprise was the unexpected *massive* numbers of Soviet émigrés. Not being able to fathom why so many people would leave the former Soviet Union to emigrate to Israel, she and her activist cohorts were still trying to figure out an adequate political response.

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5. In many Israeli and also Palestinian homes the bathroom consists of only a tub—often highly truncated—and a wash basin, the commode in a space of its own.

The time passed quickly, and we decided we had better send out for some food. Just as we were finishing the meal, Rayna's spouse, Petar, returned home from his interview about his reserve assignment. A Yesh Gvul military refuser, he had already spent time in jail rather than serve in the Occupied Territories. He was not sure whether they would give him an alternative assignment this time or whether he would have to refuse service again and face still another jail term. Despite Petar's unperturbed air, the pain and anguish this difficult choice caused was highlighted when we watched the late-night news and heard the report about a reservist refuser who was found hanging in his jail cell. Recovering from the shock of the news, Rayna wheeled around to face me, her jaws clenched: "You don't have to worry about organizing in the U.S. This country will implode on itself!"

Is It Worth It?

The shops on Saladin Street were just beginning to open, and the street was coming to life. As I headed toward the Old City, I got wind of a rumor that a women's demonstration was going to be mounted at 11:00 A.M. Returning with my camera shortly before the appointed hour, I strolled back and forth on the street, trying to make sure that I was positioned well to observe and record the action. I ran into members of the American delegation with whom I had gone to the Jordan Valley the previous week, and they, too, were walking up and down the street, trying to feign nonchalance.

After more than a half an hour of pacing, I began to feel silly and was about ready to give up, when I heard several stones hit an Israeli jeep parked nearby. Within a few minutes I made out voices chanting in the distance. Looking down Saladin Street, I spotted a band of about thirty women. It was one of those instantaneous demonstrations, where the pedestrians suddenly step from the sidewalk into the street and unfurl a banner. Surging forward, led by a woman with a bullhorn, they held aloft a banner proclaiming the sanctity of Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital.

Everything happened very fast; the women were on the street for only a few minutes before we heard shots ring out. The crowds, including many Palestinian press photographers who had also materialized out of nowhere, jammed into the shops. Peering out the door, trying to protect ourselves at the same time we were trying to photograph the event, we saw several jeeps careening down the street behind the women. The small march turned down Azzarah Street toward the National Palace Hotel, the jeeps in hot

pursuit. Before the soldiers were able to catch up to them, the women dispersed just as quickly as they had come together, once again melting into the crowds on the street. After calm returned, I walked back to the hotel. On my way I spotted several of the women strolling along, as if they were innocent pedestrians. While they escaped capture, at least one young man was not quite so lucky. Nabbed outside the hotel, he was taken to the police station, where reportedly he was beaten by dozens of soldiers.

This small demonstration seemed to have opened the flood-gates. About a half hour later, on my way to the Old City, I saw at least six jeeps lined up, with soldiers apprehending any young men who happened to be passing by. The small crowd of onlookers that gathered fled when two soldiers on an adjoining rooftop yelled, "*Yalla*" (let's go) and made threatening motions with their guns. An Israeli photographer at my elbow told me not to worry, that they would not do anything to me if I stood my ground and kept photographing. Not willing to trust his judgment, I withdrew to the steps of the post office, from where I could continue to observe the scene. A surly-looking soldier sitting in the back of one of the jeeps finally became annoyed by the constant clicking of my camera and gestured to me, saying something in Hebrew. I had become fixated on trying to frame the jeep and a small tree on which a Star of David had been painted. Emboldened by the Israeli photographer and my protected position behind the pillar, I remained in place.

The jeeps finally drove off, leaving behind the three soldiers who had been doing most of the harassing. They donned their flak vests and headed up Suleiman Street, where they gratuitously stopped people and diverted traffic. Later I learned that at the same time the women had begun their march up Saladin, the *shabab* had attacked the post office with bottles. Lulled into believing that the *intifada* was dead, or at least had died down in Jerusalem, the police and soldiers had been caught off guard. Being taken by surprise seemed to infuriate them, probably more than the demonstration itself.

The initial women's march foretold the beginning of more demonstrations that day. Sitting outside a cafe in the Old City, I first noticed a small group of boys heading up toward Damascus Gate. Then, over the din of the crowd, I heard the rhythm of their chant, and the women's contingent emerged out of the pedestrian traffic, making its way toward Damascus Gate. Led by the same woman with the bull horn, the smaller group now had only a little scrap of cloth to hold aloft as a flag, having dropped their banner during the earlier chase by the soldiers.

From the other direction, just outside Damascus Gate, gunshots rang out. A few seconds later, several boys came running down the lane in the

opposite direction. I was swept into the kitchen of the juice stand by the owner, who started to lower the shutter as soon as he heard the shots. As the gunfire subsided and we stepped outside again, a German woman with whom I had been chatting pointed to a boy across the lane who was holding his leg and limping. The boy, apparently shot in the leg by a rubber bullet, was whisked into one of the stores by his friends. The soldiers did not come after them down the narrow lanes, but they were swarming all over outside Damascus Gate and along Suleiman Street. Across the way at the bus station, several mounted police kept moving through the foot traffic, their large horses intimidating people. A Border Guard trio in flak jackets were stopping young men on the street. I saw one young man arguing with them instead of producing his identification card. They slapped him several times in the face but, much to my amazement, did not detain him.

More jeeps began to amass, photographers arrived, and traffic was momentarily diverted. Just as inexplicably, the road was reopened. As I walked back to the hotel I could feel the mounting level of tension on the street. Clusters of women in *thaubs,* families with children, and old men all kept their distance, watching the growing police presence and speaking in hushed voices.

That evening as I sat on the balcony of the hotel, I kept eyeing a large white cloth in the gutter across the street. I was sure it was the banner that the women had been carrying. People walked by, glancing at it furtively; others ignored it and stepped on it; some young boys kicked it open so they could read it; a car soiled it as its front wheels brushed over it turning the corner.

Watching with a combination of fascination and dread, I was tempted to cross the street to retrieve the crumpled cloth banner, to save it from being soiled further or destroyed. In a strange way it had become larger than life, a symbol of the *intifada* itself. But I was held back by a combination of fear and an unwillingness to appear foolish. All evening I debated with myself and periodically checked outside my window to see if the white cloth banner was still there. I checked one last time before going to bed. The spot where it had lain was bare; the streets were empty. The only thing I could see were the Stars of David painted on the walls across the street. How dare they use this symbol to announce their takeover of East Jerusalem! I fumed. After all, it marked my identity, too.

The next morning, as the news filtered in about the previous day's events, there were reports that fifteen young men had been arrested. I wondered if the abortive women's demonstrations and the minor skirmish at the post office had really been worth it. As if to answer my own question,

I recalled a scene from an old American movie. I cannot remember the title of the film, but one vignette has stayed with me for more than two decades. Don Murray was picketing alone, in the rain, outside a governor's mansion, protesting the impending execution of a prisoner. A reporter asked him, "Why are you doing this? You can't change the world." "Perhaps not," Murray replied, "but at least I can keep the world from changing me."

Women and the Intifada: *Two Steps Forward, One Step Backward*

I tried to hide my nervousness as Suha and I stood on the steps of the National Palace Hotel, chatting while we waited to be picked up. We were all heading to the Bisan Research Centre in Ramallah for a colloquium on Palestinian women that I had rather impulsively suggested. I was committed to making my work accessible and available to the Palestinians; nevertheless I was anxious about their reactions. How would they respond to my discussion of the women's movement? Would my initial optimism about it be completely discredited? Despite my insistence that we should have just an informal discussion, I was billed as "the speaker." Suha's presence helped to distract me, especially as we recounted to each other with amazement how far women's studies had come in Occupied Palestine. When I first met Suha Hindiyeh at the offices of the Women's Action Committee in January 1989, she had just been hired as a staff person. She shared with me then her dream of opening a women's research center. Her own research had not focused on women, but she was eager to chart a new course.

One year after our first meeting, and about six months after the birth of her baby, Suha had launched the Women's Studies Centre (its name has been changed several times) next door to the Women's Action Committee offices in Beit Hanina. During the busy winter days of the International Peace Initiative she was directing the first training session on research methods.

By the time I arrived in the summer of 1991, the Women's Studies Centre had become completely independent of the women's committee

from which it had sprung and was housed in its own space in the Sheikh Jarrah district of East Jerusalem. During the morning I spent there, Suha told me with great pride about the workshop on wife battering that she had organized just two weeks earlier, an accomplishment of no small order in the face of the resistance she encountered.

Nationalist leaders, always wary of alienating the population, had pleaded with her to reconsider. The usual question posed to women in practically every nationalist movement was asked: "Is this the right time to raise an issue like this?" It seems that there was also concern that the two workshop speakers, who were both Christians, would engage in Muslim bashing. The critics did not back off completely and were still convinced that she was making a mistake. They were mollified, however, by the fact that Suha, who is a Muslim, would serve as a moderator. Despite opposition it seemed less threatening to raise some of these more culturally sensitive women's issues in a research setting.

Eileen Kutaub, a sociologist at Bir Zeit University, later recounted to me an experience almost identical to Suha's, which had occurred when she had suggested that the Bisan Research Centre organize a conference on the *hijab*. The center, which I visited initially during its first days, had launched a Women's Studies Committee composed largely of feminist scholars from Bir Zeit University. Like the Women's Studies Centre that Suha coordinated, this group was committed to action and advocacy research and to making their work meaningful to the activist women's committees.

Under pressure, particularly from male nationalist figures, the Bisan Women's Studies Committee had broadened the original agenda of its December 1990 conference and had called it The *Intifada* and Some Women's Social Issues. With participation of representatives from all the women's committees both at the podium and from the floor, the event had been transformed from a critique of the imposition of the "veil" to a critical examination of the women's movement itself. A recurring theme had become the lack of genuine integration of a women's agenda into the nationalist movement.

The nationalist leaders, who had taken their places among the 350 women and 50 invited men, each had made opening remarks condemning the imposition of any dress code on women. But more significantly, as Eileen recounted, the impassioned comments from the floor—the theory growing out of daily life—had made them sit up and take notice. As women had stepped forward from the audience to recount their personal experiences, the facts and figures had taken on new meaning. Many of the old social patterns that had been particularly oppressive for women were resurfacing. For instance, as a result of economic hardships and the

difficulty of supporting a large family, parents were withdrawing their daughters from high school and university and were marrying them off at a younger age. At the same time, the newly emerging "culture of modesty" was forcing women to wear more restrictive clothing. Gender oppression was no longer merely an abstract idea. It was a label that fit the experiences of the Palestinian women who spoke out at the conference.

It is hard to know how effectively the momentum from this conference might have reinvigorated the women's movement and helped to incorporate women's issues more effectively into the national movement. One month later, the United States and its allies had started bombing Iraq. The Palestinians, for the most part, had been restricted to their towns, villages, and refugee camps, if not to their homes. And in the aftermath of the Gulf War, issues of economic survival had become paramount. As funds coming in from the outside had been greatly reduced, many of the social programs that had benefited women had been cut back. Child-care centers had been closed down and some of the women's cooperatives were floundering.

Following on the heels of the Gulf War, Secretary of State James Baker had begun his shuttle diplomacy, trying to convince both the Palestinians and the Israelis to participate in an American-designed peace process. Included in those early discussions had been two leading feminists, Zahira Kamal and Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi. With each return visit of Baker's, the debate among people on the street had heated up, and it had been carried into meetings of the women's committees. In Kufr Nameh, Jabalya, and Issawiyeh, I had picked up clues that the grass-roots women's committees were spending more and more time debating the wisdom of a peace conference and less time on the specific problems of women. Each group seemed busy wooing their constituency to the analysis of the particular political party with which they were aligned.

I found it ironic when I spoke with village and camp activists that just as they had become more outspoken about women's subjugation, their organizing efforts on gender issues were floundering. And despite the reorganization of and renewed optimism about the Women's Higher Council following the December 1990 women's conference, the coalition of women's organizations was still limping along. Lip service was paid to the importance of dealing with sexual harassment, wife battering, and the resumption of early marriages and dowries, but still the women's committees seemed unable to transcend their factional differences—a problem that historically has plagued feminist-nationalist movements.

On the one hand, the changing consciousness I had noted earlier had taken root, and many activists, like the young unmarried woman from Issawiyeh, were acting on their visions of new roles for women. Younger

married women, like Amal in Kufr Nameh, spoke of a greater openness in their relationships with their husbands, and some of their older counterparts were proclaiming, "Now it is the women's turn." On the other hand, I kept hearing reports about the return to old practices, about the forced imposition of modest dress.

It was hard to shake the sense of déjà vu. I had been convinced Palestine would be different from other countries that had waged a war for independence. It was not just because women's consciousness was transformed, or that they had become empowered, but because there was a viable women's movement to back up these changes, to provide support, and to develop and demand programs that served a women's agenda. Was the women's movement, like the *intifada* itself, reduced to only 20 percent, as the Bedouin merchant's son had told me on my first day? Or was this one of those moments when the national issue would have to take precedence? If so, I worried about how the momentum could be regained.

We debated these questions at the women's studies colloquium in Ramallah. In spite of my initial nervousness and my trepidations about presenting my research on Palestinian women to them, I gained confidence as the discussion picked up steam. Many of the Palestinian feminists and activists there that day, including those who themselves had been doing research on women, were surprised by the evidence I presented about women's changing consciousness. Apparently village women had not disclosed to them some of the feelings they had discussed with me—or perhaps they were unprepared to hear them. Despite all the disadvantages of being an outsider, in that role one is often told things to which insiders do not become privy, especially if these are ideas that break with cultural norms and expectations.

Ultimately, the colloquium group agreed that younger activists had indeed changed even as some cultural practices that reasserted traditional gender boundaries were simultaneously re-surfacing. The dozen or so of us feminist scholars and committee activists gathered that day agreed on some points, however tentatively. But we argued vociferously about others.

Was it premature, and perhaps inappropriate, to expect a real shift in the division of labor between men and women in the home; to measure the success of the women's movement by the extent to which domestic burdens in the household were redefined? Was the extended family constraining the "new woman" and the "new man" not to practice their changed ideas? On the latter point, we each had enough examples to convince us that it was, but Assia, my friend Rifaat's sister, held out, insisting on the value of the extended family, regardless. Planted simultaneously in the East and the West, Assia was always concerned about keeping Palestinian culture alive.

It was not that the rest of us were suggesting the destruction of this cultural form, but rather that cultural values had to be transformed so that the extended family supported rather than circumscribed women's changing roles. For this, many of us argued, a vital women's movement was necessary, and the nationalist agenda had to be broadened.

Could the grass-roots women's movement still play this role? In the early days of the *intifada* it had managed to mobilize many women and to raise their consciousness. It was much easier to sustain the momentum, and even to challenge patriarchal control, during this period of popular mobilization. To keep the issues alive and to marshall institutional support in a future state, however, a unified front was necessary. Instead, there was continued factional fighting among the women's groups, a mirror image of the heightened factionalism between the various political parties. Facing two directions, toward their own political alignment on the one hand and toward the larger women's movement, across alignments, on the other, the women's committees had to juggle these sometimes competing interests—in other words, to balance their dual identities and allegiances as feminist-nationalists. It was not surprising that they had not succeeded fully, only disappointing. Perhaps the ball was being picked up by the three independent women's studies centers.[1] With their commitment to action research, they might be able to reinvigorate the grass-roots movement or at least keep alive support for a women's agenda.

I hoped that the women's studies centers were not simply moving a moribund women's movement from the streets to the academy. I hoped that the women's movement would remain sufficiently well organized to fulfill the needs of the women who had told me two years earlier that if necessary they would make another *intifada*—for women.

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1. In addition to the East Jerusalem Women's Studies Centre, and the Women's Studies Committee at the Bisan Research Centre in Ramallah, Suhar Khalifeh, the Palestinian novelist, has opened a Women's Training Center in Nablus. I have never visited the latter, but from various reports I understand that in addition to vocational training, a women's studies program has been established there. Although I could get no confirmation from any of the Bir Zeit University women, I had also heard that the university had approved a women's studies program.

A Turning Point

Thinking back to the first of my regular early-evening chats on the balcony of the National Palace Hotel, I recall that Saeb, the Bir Zeit lecturer who had a small grocery shop around the corner from the hotel, had agreed with my initial characterization. Yes, the mood in Jerusalem seemed more relaxed. "But," he warned, "you will find the situation quite different outside of Jerusalem." As I revisited friends and sites in the West Bank and Gaza, I was struck by the complex and contradictory signs that abounded.

The appearance of some semblance of normalcy was a welcome relief, but it belied the feeling of frustration, of low-level depression, that dominated the mood of most Palestinian intellectuals. Saeb was part of what I began to realize was a growing chorus: "The people are tired, discouraged. Once again, we have no control over anything." He went further than most, musing;

> What have we gained? What is the *intifada,*
> after all? What are the stones against them?
> The strikes have been used against us,
> have hurt *us* instead of the Israelis.

My friend Assia, one of the family members of my university colleague, lamented, her voice laden with resignation:

> Never have I been so frustrated. Not since 1948,
> not in 1956, 1967, 1973, or 1982 in Lebanon.
> After almost four years of the *intifada,*

what have we gotten? Talks about autonomy?
This is worse than Camp David.[1]

The pessimism was fueled not only by the lack of progress on the national question but also by growing internal problems, including the escalation of personal violence and economic hardship. Although many of the agricultural cooperatives, like those in Kufr Nameh and Jabalya, had managed to survive the Gulf War curfews or were in the process of being resuscitated, many farmers had been ruined. More and more people had to rely on UNRWA for food, and the number of men dependent on work inside Green Line Israel was increasing. The punitive cutoff of funds by the Saudi government to the PLO for their opposition to the Gulf War, coupled with the loss of revenues from Palestinians in Kuwait, resulted in the curtailment of many social services and a growing school dropout rate, especially for girls.

While most of the population was reeling from economic losses, some people were benefiting, as I learned from talking to farmers in the Jordan Valley. It was not only the landed, old-time elite who were thriving amid belt-tightening measures that others had to take. In the midst of this flagging economy, political cadres continued to be rewarded for their loyalty and were engaged in a spate of new construction.

On the positive side, the earlier, uncritical enthusiasm for the *intifada* was being replaced by a healthy stock-taking. Strategy and tactics were being evaluated, including the economic and social programs that had been so widely celebrated. For instance, rather than willy-nilly continuing to accept outside funds to initiate more women's cooperative projects, a decision was made to use consultants to study more systematically what economic enterprises would be the most viable.

Questions were also raised about the unintended effect of the boycott of Israeli goods, about how some Palestinian businessmen profited from the production of shoddy merchandise. While their public criticism previously had been muted, members of the women's committees were beginning to challenge openly the poor representation of women in the ranks of the leadership both inside and outside Palestine. They were still cautious about offending traditional sensibility, but women activists had become increasingly insistent that socially volatile issues like sexual harassment and wife battering be addressed. An open debate ensued about the need to democratize the Palestinian political structure, including the Palestine National Council.

1. The 1978 agreement between Israel and Egypt.

The self-scrutiny was reflected, too, in some creeping disillusionment with the young activists who before had been so lionized. While understanding their students' frustration, professors were becoming concerned about the students' increasingly lackadaisical approach to their studies, complaining that they did not prepare for class or bother to show up for exams. Everywhere, there was widespread concern about the level of horizontal violence, a feeling that some of the very youth who were earlier applauded as guardians of public safety were now verging on vigilantism, exercising their own initiative in punishing alleged *ameel* (agents), rather than taking direction from the Unified Leadership.

In trying to account for their hobbled condition, the intellectuals, especially, harshly judged the way the Palestinian leadership handled the Gulf crisis: its failure to make it clear that their opposition to the United States–led intervention did not constitute support of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. But as often as this criticism was repeated among intellectuals and urban activists, when I spent time with people in West Bank villages and Jabalya Refugee Camp in Gaza, it was clear that popular support for Saddam Hussein still had not abated.

While there were differences between the intellectuals and the people in the street about how the Palestinian leadership had handled the Gulf War and about the shape of the *intifada,* there was something more akin to consensus when it came to the feelings about the "Baker peace process" that was being formulated that summer of 1991. I met a few people who were convinced that the Israelis would relent and that something good might come of United States–sponsored talks, but most Palestinians with whom I spoke believed that it would only produce another disaster for them. Abandoned by the Arab world and by Europe, they felt that they had lost control. There was widespread agreement that it had been a mistake to continue to meet with Baker. What I heard repeatedly was that the Palestinians should have laid down *their* conditions and continued the dialogue with Baker only if these were addressed, rather than to have continued to compromise at each turn. The question of Jerusalem loomed large, and even those who felt that the actual naming of a Jerusalemite delegate was not essential agreed that there had to be a solid commitment on the return of East Jerusalem.

One of the most serious concerns I heard expressed about the discussions with Baker focused on the implications of shifting to the diplomatic arena. The rhetorical question friends raised during our conversations still rings in my ears: "If all the energy is placed in the political arena, if people's hopes are transferred to a process over which they have little control, how can the *intifada* be reinvigorated?" People criticized the

intifada tactics that had led to prolonged social and economic deprivation, especially the curtailing of social life, the extended boycotts of goods, and the scaling back of commercial life. They wondered how people could be mobilized once again without resorting to this same politics of sacrifice?

These were not merely academic questions. Many Palestinians felt they were vital to creating the conditions that might enable them to enter negotiations from a position of strength, not weakness. And they were crucial to recapturing and keeping alive the sense of dignity and self-respect that was achieved by Palestinians taking control of their lives and directly resisting the occupation of what is left of Palestine.

By the time I left Occupied Palestine in mid-August 1991, the trauma of the Gulf War and the extended curfews had largely receded. Despite the continued hardships exacerbated by the war, the concern about the floundering, if not death, of the *intifada,* and the disarray inside the Israeli peace movement, I departed feeling somewhat optimistic. The period of critical evaluation was encouraging. And in a strange sort of way, it seemed that the lively debate about the "peace process" was reinvigorating the popular imagination in Occupied Palestine.

EPILOGUE

On September 13, 1993, Yasir Arafat, the chairman of the PLO stood on the lawn of the White House as thousands of dignitaries, including four U.S. presidents, watched him shake hands with Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. Hosted and toasted by Senators, members of Congress, and the press corps, it seems inconceivable that only five years earlier Arafat was refused entry into the United States, that the UN General Assembly was forced to move its proceedings to Geneva in order to hear his address. What was implicit in that speech five years earlier become explicit as Yitzhak Rabin and Yasir Arafat proclaimed mutual recognition of each other's peoples.

As all eyes in the United States were turned to the stage in Washington, in Jericho, tens of thousands of Palestininians jammed the streets, dancing and signing "Billadi," their national anthem. In East Jerusalem, the red, green, black, and white Palestinian flag was unfurled over Damascus Gate.

These scenes were reminiscent of what had happened in November 1991, at the close of the Madrid conference. Finally given respectful attention by the international community, the Palestinians had been ecstatic and had streamed into the streets of Jericho and Jerusalem to offer olive branches to their occupiers. In 1991 the soldiers of the occupying Israeli army took aim at the youths who unfurled the forbidden flag. Two years later in September 1993, their guns were lowered.

Will the momentary taste of euphoria turn sour, even bitter, as it did then? During the nearly two years between the Madrid conference and the 1993 peace accord, conditions in Occupied Palestine worsened. Israeli settlement building continued unabated; houses in the Gaza Strip were shattered by unrelenting cannon fire from Israeli tanks, under the guise of searching for "unwanted" youths; more and more people were forced to rely on UNRWA handouts as the already tenuous economy collapsed totally; and Palestinian institutions faltered in the face of the Israeli closure of Gaza and the West Bank. With the sealing off of East Jerusalem, the intellectual, aristic, and religious capital of Occupied Palestine, businesses there collapsed.

Under these dire circumstances and in the face of exhaustion, continued repression, and near starvation is it any wonder that the Arafat-led PLO settled for considerably less than their minimum demands? It is easy to understand how the "Gaza-Jericho first" formula replaced the demand for interim self-rule in Occupied Palestine as a prelude to an independent state with its capital in East Jerusalem.

Like many Palestinians, those of us who have heard their stories, their aspirations, and their pleas for justice wonder how the symbolic gestures can be translated into concrete accomplishments on the path to self-determination. Will there be a meaningful peace with justice for the Palestinians? With the 1948 refugees continuing to languish in the crowded, squalid camps in Gaza and the West Bank—and especially in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan—it is hard not to worry that the agreement reached between the PLO and Israel will simply create Palestinian "bantustans" (the "homelands" created for Black South Africans by the white government).

The behind-the-scenes negotiations that took the world by surprise might have produced a détente between the Israelis and the PLO, but they also might have further undermined the spirit of democracy that infused the early days of the *intifada.* Many of the signs that Palestine might offer a new social model have already faded, and many of the old social patterns are reemerging.

The dynamism of the *intifada* was derived partially from the absence of an established central authority. Regardless of their loyalty to the PLO or their allegiance to a particular political party within it, the foot soldiers of the *intifada* were inventing their own institutions, including a rotating, pluralistic consensus form of governing. In the process, social relations were being transformed, boundaries were being crossed.

As the *intifada* continued, the PLO bureaucracy in Tunis asserted increased control, and eventually power was transferred from the activists on the ground to the politicians and academicians at the negotiating table. Accompanying that shift, the influence of women was also greatly diminished, except to the extent that their singular talents might be tapped. Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, because of her ease with and eloquence in the English language and her familiarity with American culture, became the highly visible spokesperson for the Palestinian delegation. But as she was making public pronouncements to the press, the negotiators actually at the table in Washington, D.C., and in hidden villas in Norway were all men. A few women were appointed to the working groups that began to grapple with the problems of water, transportation, and communication. But by and large the mantle of authority has been returned to men, and to

members of the old elite families. Has the period of fluidity and social experimentation ended now that the foundation for a nation-state is being laid?

It was too much to expect a complete social revolution, of course, and I now have a more realistic view than when I first went to Occupied Palestine in 1988. Perhaps I, too, have become a "pessoptimist." Nevertheless, I firmly believe that the *intifada* will become more than a footnote in the annals of history. It helped to change the face of Middle Eastern politics and forced the world to recognize the Palestinian identity and cause. Moreover, it was an important journey for the Palestinians themselves. By taking control of their own destiny—to the extent it was possible—they regained their pride as a people.

The journey for Palestinian women has been a more complex one, for while they were engaging in the nationalist cause, they were also blazing their own trail, quietly questioning their own culture. The kinds of changes that I have observed in individual consciousness cannot be eradicated, but without the ability to exercise a political and social will to institutionalize these changes, they will remain individual and personal. On the other hand, when the Palestinians finally achieve their goal of statehood, a strong, autonomous women's movement will remain necessary. Otherwise, as has happened in revolutions around the world, the women's groups are likely to become handmaidens of the state, reluctant to challenge patriarchal authority.

The journeys of the Palestinians have been momentous and public. Mine have been modest and mostly private. They took me across many boundaries, most of them unmarked, like the one I crossed from Green Line Israel into Occupied Palestine. When I first traveled to Palestine, my goal was to understand the situation better so that I could speak out as a Jew, could act on the talmudic principles I learned in *cheder.* I believed that my Jewish identity would make my criticisms of Israeli occupation more acceptable.

This seemed simple enough. Nevertheless, I sometimes felt guilty about relying so heavily on that identity for credibility. After all, I was not religious, and I certainly was not a Zionist. My "Jewishness" revolves mainly around the remnants of Eastern European immigrant culture that still resonate for me, and of childhood recollections: of family gatherings at *Pesach* (Passover), of spinning the *dreidel* at Hanukkah, of helping to build the arbor at *Succoth.* These memories were evocative but were not the driving force for holding onto my Jewish identity. Anti-Semitism was. I felt that as long as the specter of anti-Semitism lurked anywhere it was

important to identify myself as a Jew. As I began to sort out my reactions and feelings about my experience in Palestine, I realized that the question of my Jewish identity was considerably more complex, that it went beyond this intellectual construct.

The challenge to Jewish chauvinism that was part of my original intent was turned inward, too. Was it that same chauvinism that has propelled me, I wonder: an attempt to redeem the image of the socially conscious Jew? And was it the violation of that Jewish social consciousness that so enraged me when I observed firsthand the actions of "the Jewish state"? Like others, I have been grappling with the problem of how a person can transcend the parochialism of ethnic identity while remaining emotionally enmeshed in it, of how to honor and celebrate differences, yet not promote an atomization of human society into more and more narrowly defined units.

The irony of my eschewing nationalism but supporting the nationalist aspirations of the Palestinians has not been lost on me, either. Since early childhood I have refused to stand for the "Star-Spangled Banner." And although I was repelled by the massive display of Israeli flags in Jerusalem, I was always thrilled by the defiant unfurling of the Palestinian flag in the Occupied Territories. I like to think that it is because there is a difference between the flag as a symbol of resistance and the flag as the banner of a nation-state, that once there is a Palestinian state I will criticize the flaunting of its flag.

It has been considerably more confusing to deal with the lingering effects of my own ethnocentrism. Teaching that polygyny might actually benefit women, or talking about the potential for solidarity among women in a gender-segregated society was one thing. It was quite another to contain my anger when, for instance, my woman host in Jabalya was denied access to the men's space at a wake. Similarly, I have become increasingly sensitive to and appreciative of the varieties of expression of Islam. Nevertheless, the celebration of martyrdom still makes me uneasy. And it is hard to shake the feeling that the spread of the *hijab* and *sharia* attire does not necessarily represent increased suppression of women.

I was not able to get into the heads of martyrs, to ask co-wives about their lives, or to hear directly from women themselves why they decided to put on the *hijab.* Short of this, I have tried my best to step back and think dispassionately about these issues. Talking with Palestinian friends in the United States and with American feminists who have lived and worked in the Middle East has helped. Seeing parallels between ideas and practices in Palestinian culture and in my own culture has sometimes worked, and so has introspection. As I confronted my own reluctance to write about my private ruminations, I realized that my discomfort with the public expres-

sion of pain and grief in Palestine, for instance, was less a reflection of cultural differences than of personality. On the other hand, while I have learned to think about martyrdom as a political act, the religious fervor that marks self-sacrifice confuses me—just as it did during the Vietnam war when selfless Buddhist monks immolated themselves.

I know that women don the *hijab* or *sharia* dress for a host of reasons. For some, this attire might be a simple display of piety; for others, a political act, an espousal of Islamic culture, and a repudiation of Western domination; but for still others, it might be a result of coercion or intimidation. It is the latter, the attempt to contain women, that has worried me and made Palestinian feminists fearful. But as I learned from Nahla, the Kufr Nameh women's committee organizer married to her devout cousin, even when *sharia* dress is imposed it cannot annihilate feminist consciousness.

It has by no means been easy, however, to cross the threshold from theory to practice, from talking about the varieties of international feminisms in the abstract to learning to respect fully the integrity of Palestinian feminism. I tried to stop measuring their ideas against my own and simply listen. As I grew more familiar with Palestinian life, I became more observant, more attuned to the nuances of gestures—more open. In turn, the women began to see me as less of a "Western feminist" and lowered their guard.

My experiences with both Palestinian women and Palestinian men have profoundly reshaped my thinking about how we define a women's agenda. I no longer know whether men and women must share equally all the work of a society in order for women to achieve liberation; whether maintaining different, but complementary, roles necessarily means inequality. Learning to appreciate the communal nature of Palestinian society—in contrast to my own highly individualistic one—and the way the aspirations of women are joined to their national aspirations has led me to think differently, too, about the varieties of *feminisms* that exist in the United States as well.

I am still plagued, however, by many doubts. How, for instance, can we acknowledge real differences in experience and cultural expression without creating distance, "otherness"? Ironically, it is perhaps that very sense of being an outsider, an "other"—as a Jew and as a woman—that has enabled me to cross boundaries, to ally myself with the Palestinian women's movement and to support the quest for Palestinian self-determination.

On my first trip to Nablus in 1988 I met a priest from the ancient Hebrew sect of the Samaritans. When I asked him what future he predicted for the Palestinians, he pulled out a one-thousand-year-old parchment filled with ancient Hebrew writing and astrological symbols. "Not good," he said, adding, "at least not in the near future."

I can't predict the future, but I do know that in the best of all possible worlds the Palestinians would achieve self-determination and an equitable remedy for the refugees. In the best of all possible worlds the transformative potential that was embodied in the *intifada* would be realized, and a democratic, pluralistic society would flourish. In the best of all possible worlds Israel would become a real Middle Eastern country, not a Western colonial outpost, and would someday forge an alliance with the Palestinians. In the best of all possible worlds Israel/Palestine would become a single, secular democratic state with all its citizens free to live anywhere and governed by the same laws.

Since we do not live in the best of all possible worlds, the most I can hope for is some modicum of justice. Without it, there will not be peace. And in another decade or two or even three, there will be another *intifada,* and another, and still another.

GLOSSARY
HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

Glossary

Unless otherwise noted, the terms defined are Arabic words that denote specific Palestinian practices or expressions. Arabic and Hebrew terms have been transliterated without diacritics.

al Khalil Hebron.

al Quds Jerusalem.

arghileh (or nargileh) water pipe.

bayanat Literally, proclamation. Refers to *intifada* communiqués issued by the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU).

cheder (Yiddish) Hebrew school.

hatta Man's traditional white head-dress, held in place with black band, usually associated with Bedouins or rural notables.

hijab Usually translated "veil," but in reality, most Palestinian Muslim women who observe modest dress do not wear a face veil. Their head covering alone, usually a white scarf, is referred to as a *hijab.*

hora (Hebrew) A folk dance performed in a circle, similar to the Palestinian *dabke.*

imam Muslim priest or religious leader.

kanafi A sweet made of dried goat cheese and noodle dough that is coated with syrup after being baked. A specialty of Nablus.

kuffiyah Black and white or red and white men's headdress, traditionally associated with peasants. It has become a symbol of Palestinian nationalism and most recently of the *intifada.*

jilbab The long, usually grey, frock coat worn by many Muslim women, especially in Gaza.

jillabya The long, loose garment worn by both men and women throughout North Africa and the Middle East. In Palestine today it is still worn by the Bedouin and by the people in the Jordan Valley.

servis (service) A seven-passenger Mercedes jitney that can be flagged down at any point along established routes.

shabab Youth, usually boys, although the term has come to refer to all youthful activists.

sharia Refers literally to Quranic law or prescriptions.

sumud Steadfastness, referring to the ability to withstand and overcome hardships and especially to remain on the land.

taboun A traditional oven, usually inside a clay or brick dome. Coals are kept glowing in a small dug-out pit inside, and bread dough is "baked" by placing the dough directly on the coals.

thaub Traditional ankle-length long-sleeved dress, decorated with embroidery at least around the neck.

UNRWA United Nations Relief Works Agency, the agency responsible for the welfare of the Palestinian refugees.

wadi Gully, wash.

yarmulke (Hebrew) Black skull cap worn by men.

zaatar Refers both to the wild thyme plant and to the seasoning that is made by adding salt and sesame seeds to the dried thyme.

Historical Chronology

1515–1917 Ottoman rule of Palestine.

1882–1904 First wave of Jewish settlers to Palestine, beginning with the departure from Russia of 7,000 Jews in 1882; establishment of Petah Tikvah (1883) as a plantation colony. Referred to as the first *aliyah.* The majority of the 24,000 Jews living in Palestine in 1880 were religious city dwellers.

1893 The term *Zionism* coined (by Nathan Birnbaum) to designate the movement to secure the Jewish return to the land of Israel.

1897 First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, with the stated goal of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

1899–1902 Increased Zionist land purchases precipitate tensions between Arabs and Jews.

1904–1914 Second wave of Jewish settlement begins, referred to as the second *aliyah.* The 15,000–20,000 people in this wave are dedicated to working on the land.

1914–1918 World War I.

1915–1916 Hussein-McMahon correspondence: British promise Arab independence in exchange for fighting the Ottomans.

1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement: Secret Anglo-French agreement to divide the Ottoman Middle East.

1917–1922 Balfour Declaration: Declaration of British support in 1917 for the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." Rejected by General Arab Congress (1918). Jewish population estimated at between 56,000 and 90,000 (depending on sources); Arab population estimated at 504,000.

Defeat of Ottomans (1917). British establish civil administration in Palestine (1920). Palestine declared a British mandate (1922).

1920 First Palestinian National Congress (in Haifa). Demands for an end to British support for Zionism, an end to Jewish immigration, and formation of a representative national government. Twenty-four-member Arab Executive Committee formed to serve as political leadership of Palestine.

1921 Demonstrations and outbreak of violence in reaction to increasing Jewish immigration.

Formation of Palestinian Women's Union, first women's political organization, to improve standard of living of the poor and organize women around national activities.

1929 Widespread riots against continued Jewish immigration and in reaction to rumors of Jewish intentions to rebuild the Temple and attack al-Aqsa Mosque.

One hundred and thirty-three Jews killed by Palestinian Arabs (64 in Hebron), and 116 Arabs shot to death, most by British troops.

First Arab Women's Congress of Palestine held in Jerusalem October 26, to consolidate efforts of women's groups. Women's delegation meets with British High Commissioner, forms a procession of 120 cars through the streets of Jerusalem to return to congress, stopping at foreign consulates to present a resolution protesting Zionist immigration and the Balfour Declaration.

1935 Sheik Izz ad-Din al-Qassam forms guerrilla forces in hills of Galilee and issues call for armed revolt to end the British occupation. Killed by British patrol.

1936–1939 Palestinian revolt against British rule, beginning with general strike on April 19, 1936. British declare state of emergency. Commercial strikes, general strikes, and other tactics, including military operations, used during three-year popular uprising.

1939–1945 World War II.

1945 Unauthorized Jewish immigrants, including holocaust survivors, arrive in Palestine.

"Jewish Revolt" against the British declared by Haganah (paramilitary army, transformed into Israeli army after statehood declared).

1946 British grant Transjordan independence.

Jewish underground military operations against the British are launched. Irgun (Jewish underground unit) detonates bomb at King David Hotel.

1947 UN General Assembly adopts Resolution 181 on November 19 recommending the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state with Jerusalem as an internationalized city. The plan grants 56 percent of the land to the Jewish population (which at the time total 650,000 Jews, or 33 percent of the population) and 44 percent to the Arabs (who number 1.3 million, 67 percent of the population).

Arab League declares partition plan of Palestine illegal. Arab Liberation Army (volunteers from other Arab countries) formed.

Irgun and LEHI (Stern gang) terrorist units launch attacks on Arab civilians.

1948–1949 Arab-Israeli war[1]

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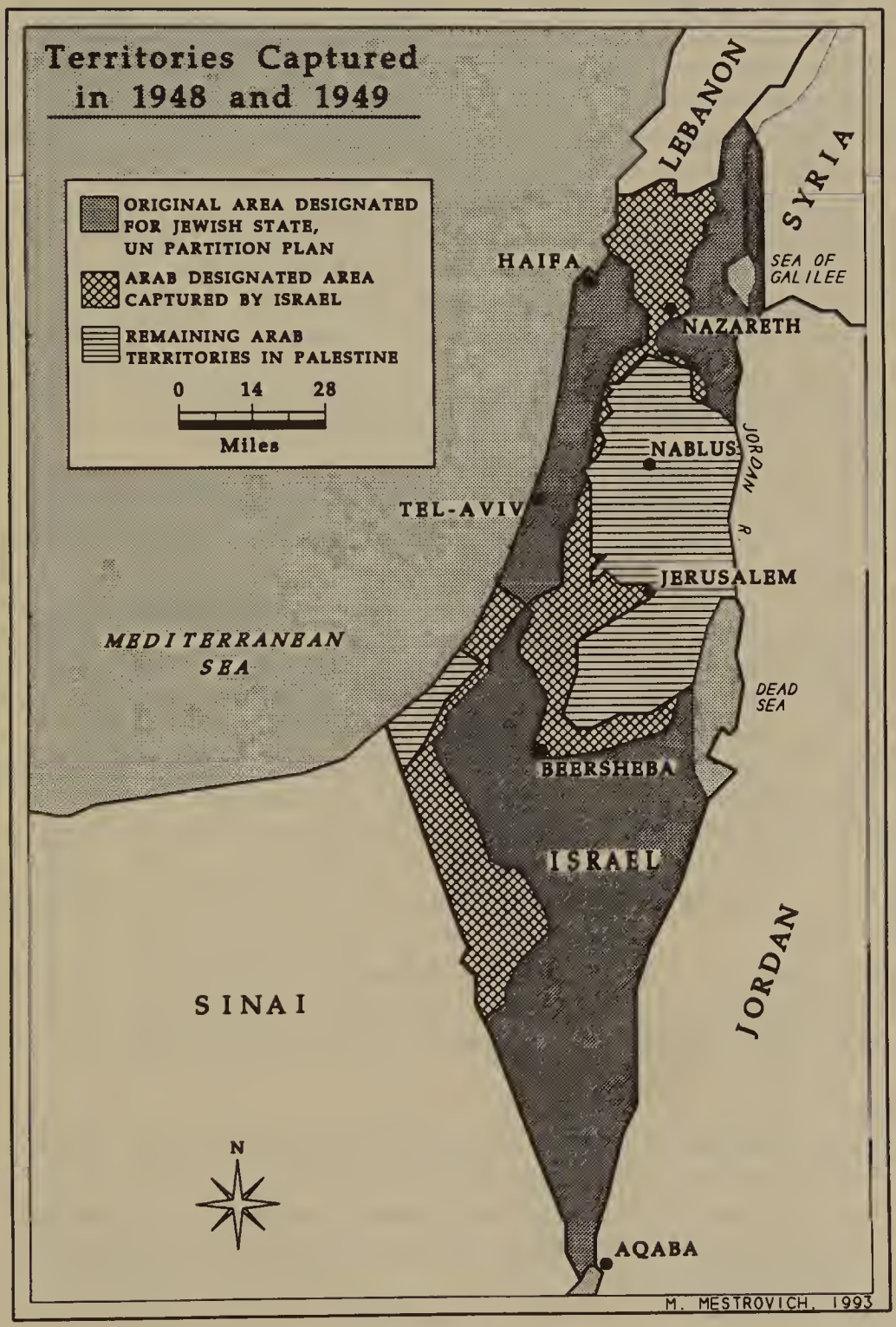
1. One of the most comprehensive, balanced accounts of the war is Simha Flappan's *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987).


Territories Captured in 1948 and 1949
ORIGINAL AREA DESIGNATED FOR JEWISH STATE, UN PARTITION PLAN
ARAB DESIGNATED AREA CAPTURED BY ISRAEL
REMAINING ARAB TERRITORIES IN PALESTINE
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ISRAEL
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Phase I (Internal conflict)

Plan Dalet adopted by the Haganah (paramilitary force that preceded formation of Israeli army) on March 10, 1948, for the capture of all lands assigned to Arab state or designated as part of international zone.

Armed engagements between Jewish and Palestinian Arab forces (of about 3,000) spread throughout the country.

LEHI (Stern gang) attacks Deir Yassin, a village in the largely Jewish area near Jerusalem. More than 250 people believed to be massacred by them (April 9, 1948). Arabs flee Haifa and Jaffa as news of Deir Yassin massacre spreads.

British mandate ends on May 14, 1948. Israel issues declaration of independence on May 15, a full six months before authorized by UN plan. Boundaries are deliberately not designated.

Phase II (Conflict between Israel and Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan)

Arab Legion invades newly declared state.

UN names Count Folke Bernadotte to mediate a peaceful settlement.

July 12–13, 1948, 50,000 Arab civilians driven out of their homes in Ramleh and Lydda.

Count Bernadotte assassinated by Israeli underground units on September 17, 1948. Jewish forces had already captured areas designated for the Arab state: Jaffa, Nazareth, the Western Galilee, Ramleh, Lydda, villages south of Jerusalem and in the Triangle of central Palestine. About 800,000 Palestinian Arabs have become refugees.

1948 UN Security Council Resolution 194 adopted, recognizing the right of Palestinians to return to their homes or be compensated for their losses.

1949 Armistice agreements signed by Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria, with Israel. By this time Israel has incorporated 77 percent of the territory of Palestine.

The West Bank comes under Jordanian rule, Gaza under Egyptian administration.

1950 West Bank formally annexed to Transjordan, creating Jordan. UNRWA begins operations to assist Palestinian refugees.

1954 Gamal Abdel Nasser rises to power in Egypt following 1952 officers' coup overthrowing King Farouk.

1956 Nasser nationalizes Suez Canal; Britain, France, and Israel invade Egypt. Israel conquers Sinai Desert and Gaza Strip. United States forces Israel to relinquish these territories.

1964 First Arab summit meeting (January) votes to establish the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). First Palestinian National Council (PNC) meeting is held in East Jerusalem.

1965 Fateh launches guerrilla attacks against Israel.

Formation of Inash al-Usra, largest of a number of Palestinian women's charitable societies founded in 1960s.

1967 Israel launches attacks on Egypt and Syria in what it claims are preemptive strikes, destroying most of the Egyptian and Syrian air forces on the ground. In compliance with mutual defense treaties, Jordan joins Egypt and Syria in war against Israel.

To the west and north, Israel captures the West Bank and Golan Heights (from Jordan and Syria, respectively), and to the east, the Sinai and Gaza are captured from Egypt.

UN Resolution 242 passed, calling for Israeli withdrawal from conquered territory.

Beginning of Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai. (Israel formally annexes East Jerusalem in 1980, and the Golan Heights in 1981).

Formation of Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) under leadership of George Habash. Group becomes member of the PLO.

1968 Fateh assumes leadership of the PLO.

1969 Naef Hawatmeh breaks away from PFLP and forms the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP).

1970 Black September: full-scale fighting breaks out between Palestinian guerrilla forces and Jordanian army. About 3,000 Palestinians are killed. The PLO is expelled from Jordan and establishes headquarters in Lebanon.

1973 October War: Egyptian and Syrian forces attack Israeli positions in the Sinai and Golan Heights in an attempt to regain lost territories and prestige.

Young Communist party leaders form the Palestine National Front in the West Bank.

Formation of Gush Emunim Jewish settler movement in West Bank.

One hundred Israeli settlements established 1967–1973.

UN Resolution 338 passed, reaffirming earlier resolution (242) on Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.

1974 Arab summit recognizes the PLO as sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Arafat addresses UN General Assembly.

Palestine National Council (PNC), ruling body of the Palestinians in exile, changes policy, implicitly accepting the idea of two states, i.e., to establish a Palestinian state "in any area liberated from Israeli control."

PFLP resigns from the PLO Executive Committee in protest of new policy and forms the Rejectionist Front.

1975 Beginning of civil war in Lebanon:

Siege of Tal al-Zaatar Refugee Camp by Christian militias. About 3,000 Palestinians killed.

1976 Pro-PLO candidates sweep West Bank municipal elections. Under the leadership of the newly elected mayors, the National Guidance Committee is formed.

1977 Likud defeats Labor Party. Menachem Begin becomes prime minister. Settlement activity increases. At time of Likud victory settlers number approximately 11,000.

1978 Working Women's Committee formed, the first group of the newly emerging Palestinian women's liberation movement.

Camp David Accords signed by Israel and Egypt. Israel returns Sinai to Egypt, and Egypt formally recognizes Israel. Accords include provision for granting "autonomy" to Palestinians after a five-year transitional period. Rejected by Palestinians. Period of intense political activity in the West Bank begins.

1980 Expulsion of several West Bank mayors by Israelis.

1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Israeli forces stand by as the Christian militia massacre more than 1,000 Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

PLO expelled from Lebanon, infrastructure destroyed. Headquarters moved to Tunis.

1984 Israel outlaws National Guidance Committee (formed after the 1976 municipal elections) in the West Bank. Palestinians mount massive protest demonstrations.

Israeli settlements in West Bank continue to expand.

1987 December 9: Eruption of the *intifada,* the day after an Israeli vehicle crashes into two vans in Jabalya Refugee Camp, killing four Palestinians. The local Palestinian population believe that the crash was staged deliberately, in retaliation for the stabbing death of an Israeli two days earlier.

1988 The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), a coalition of the major political parties in the Occupied Territories, begins to issue communiqués of the *intifada* in January.

The Israelis close all Palestinian universities (they remain closed for four years) and primary and secondary schools (which are later allowed to reopen on an irregular basis).

HAMAS (Islamic Resistance Movement) founded in Gaza.

Abu Jihad, leading PLO figure in charge of West Bank affairs, assassinated by Israelis in Tunis (April).

Palestinian Communist party gains seat on PNC.

Jordan suspends legal and administrative ties with the West Bank (July 31).

Following a meeting with international Jewish leaders, Yasir Arafat announces in Geneva the right of all parties in the Middle East to live in peace.

Declaration of an independent Palestinian state at 19th session of PNC in Algiers, November 15.

1990 Massive influx of Soviet émigrés to Israel.

Stepped-up construction of settlements in West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

Iraq invades Kuwait.

Arafat visits Iraq, and pictures of him embracing Saddam Hussein are broadcast widely around the world.

Security Council Resolution 672 (October 12) reiterates that a "just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict must be based on Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973)."

1991 United States leads assault against Iraq. Iraq launches SCUD missiles at Israel. Palestinians placed under forty-day curfew. While the Palestinian leadership issues condemnation of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, they align themselves with Iraq against United States–led invasion.

Secretary of State Baker begins shuttle diplomacy to jump-start peace talks between Israel and the Arabs, including the Palestinians.

Madrid Peace Conference. Palestinians are part of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

1992 Labor party forms new coalition government

Bilateral and multilateral peace talks continue between Israel and the Palestinians (as well as Arab states). The ninth round of talks end in May with no tangible results.

1993 Mutual recognition by Israel and PLO following secret negotiations in Norway.

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO counterpart, Mahmoud Abbas, sign Principles of Agreement in a public ceremony in Washington, D.C.

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