

PALESTINIANS  
*under*  
OCCUPATION

PROSPECTS  
FOR THE  
FUTURE



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
SYMPOSIUM

In Honor Of

ZAFER ALMASRI



PETER F. KROGH  
MARY C. McDAVID  
EDITORS

*Palestinians under Occupation:  
Prospects for the Future*

In this revealing collection of essays, the larger issues involved in the question of Palestine are addressed by distinguished scholars from the United States, the United Kingdom and the Middle East. Fresh and incisive analyses are made of the historical backdrop to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the outbreak of the Palestinian *intifadah* or uprising.

Contributors describe how the economic situation in the territories deteriorated and political control intensified during the period preceding the *intifadah*. They provide an inside portrait of the early organization of the uprising, and raise provocative questions both about the future of the Palestinian people and the burden to Israel of its continued occupation. Last but not least, these scholars focus on the challenge to American policy in the Middle East in a new era of Palestinian resistance and international change.

WILLIAM S. TYLER







# PALESTINIANS UNDER OCCUPATION

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EDITED BY  
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Washington, D.C.

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# Preface

On March 2, 1986, Zafer al-Masri, mayor of Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, was assassinated. One year later, on March 6, 1987, Georgetown University held the first in a series of special symposia convened in his memory. The second was held a year later, on March 4, 1988. On May 26th that same year, Georgetown University conferred an honorary degree posthumously upon Zafer al-Masri.

As part of the Georgetown symposia, distinguished scholars and experts from the United States, the United Kingdom and the Middle East gathered at Georgetown University to address the larger issues involved in the question of Palestine, including the historical backdrop to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the organization and goals of the Palestinian *intifadah* or uprising, now in its second year, the economic struggle for survival under occupation, the meaning of exile, and the U.S. role in any peaceful settlement. The result is this first volume in a Georgetown series on the Palestinians and their quest for self-determination and recognition of their human dignity.

It is the role of the university in this modern world to serve as a forum for ideas, to shed light in times of darkness, and to advance the life of the mind in the hope of improving the human condition. This is the purpose of Georgetown University in dedicating this work to the memory of Zafer al-Masri, a Palestinian martyred in the pursuit of peace, and to all Palestinians who have lost their lives in their struggle to be free.

Peter F. Krogh  
Mary C. McDavid

Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C.



## ZAFER AL-MASRI: PROFILE OF A PALESTINIAN

Peter F. Krogh

**Z**afer al-Masri was born in 1942 in Nablus to one of the most influential and prominent Palestinian families on the West Bank. His father, Taher, died when he was less than two years old. The youngest of the al-Masri children, Zafer was raised by his mother among his large, extended family in Nablus, where he completed his secondary schooling and began his university studies at Al-Najah University. In 1959 he enrolled in the American University of Beirut and received a degree in business administration in 1963. He then moved to Amman, Jordan, where he served an apprenticeship with the Cairo-Amman Bank. In 1965 he returned to Nablus to stay. In 1970 he married Raghda Nabulsi, and had one son and two daughters—Hisham, Maha and Hana.

At first he played a quiet role within the community. However, by the time the Israeli occupation of the West Bank had begun in June 1967, Zafer al-Masri had also assumed a more important public role in the Nablus community. He entered public service in 1973, when he was elected chairman of the Nablus Chamber of Commerce, a key position in that ancient commercial town. Three years later, in 1976, he was elected to the Municipal Council. Later that year he was chosen deputy mayor, a post he held until 1981. As an official of Nablus, he successfully negotiated an end to a workers' strike, securing a 25 per cent pay raise for the workers.

By the early 1980s, the residents of Nablus—as with all Palestinians—were feeling the encroachment of forced economic and infrastructural integration with the state of Israel.

Following several years of conflict over the role of the municipal government under the constraints of the Israeli occupation, Zafer al-Masri resigned the post of deputy mayor of Nablus in 1981. The Municipal Council itself was dismissed by the Israeli authorities in 1982 and replaced by an Israeli military officer.

For the next three and a half years, Zafer al-Masri attempted to mediate between the occupiers, who retained a firm grip on Nablus, and the occupied, in an effort to ensure that basic human needs of the Palestinians were met. Without a mechanism for local government, the plight of the Palestinians worsened significantly, particularly during the period from 1982 through December 1985. The Israeli military administration maintained the status quo in Nablus at a time of great need among the Palestinians for basic social, health, and human services.

In late 1985 the crisis came to a head. The worsening situation prompted a meeting of local notables, including members of the suspended Municipal Council, the professional associations and the Chamber of Commerce, in an attempt to resolve the problems caused by the absence of a properly elected city council. After reaching a consensus among themselves and after consultation with other community and religious leaders, it was decided to propose that the only freely-elected local body, the Chamber of Commerce, should assume, *en bloc*, the responsibilities of the city council. While this was a compromise measure, it also reflected the community consensus as well as an adherence to the principle of local self-government. In December 1985 the Israeli occupation authorities accepted the proposal, and Zafer al-Masri, a Chamber member, became the mayor of Nablus.

His conditions for accepting this controversial compromise had been well defined. He first required the unanimous approval of all Palestinian organizations in Nablus, and then agreed to assume only a one-year appointment. His next stipulation was that the Chamber of Commerce as a whole, and not he alone, assume the full responsibilities of the Municipal Council. Two days after assuming office, al-Masri further distanced himself from any appearance of collusion with the Israeli occupation authorities with a political statement which stressed that the move was designed solely to improve sorely needed municipal services, and was not intended as a substitute for a municipal council directly elected by the Palestinian people.

Al-Masri's political views, although rarely espoused in public, reflected mainstream Palestinian political thinking. He rejected the Camp David autonomy proposals, supported the P.L.O. as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and believed the Palestinians should engage in any political or diplomatic action that would prevent the Israelis from dominating the political arena.

In this situation, as always, Zafer al-Masri was a man who opted for balance and moderation. He had accepted the mayor's post only after securing the approval of the local population, as well as that of the P.L.O. and the Jordanian government. He rejected the artificial dichotomy between the Palestinians under Israeli occupation and those outside Palestine, and saw himself as part of a single Palestinian nation that had been dispersed by force into disparate communities throughout the world. He supported the proposal for an international peace conference to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute, based on the coexistence of Palestinian and Israeli states with equal national rights. He never articulated a political platform as such because he did not

see himself as an overtly political person, let alone a political leader. On the contrary, he saw his only political task as one of helping the Palestinians to stay on the land of Palestine until an overall political settlement resulted in self-determination. Sadly, he did not live to see that day.

Shortly before assuming the mayoral post, al-Masri remarked that, given the suffering inherent in the lives of all Palestinians, he felt a civic obligation and a moral duty to assume the responsibility even at that charged moment. The alternative, in his view, was to wait for the occupation to end, and to do no more than hope from the sidelines for an improvement in conditions.

He was assassinated on his way to work on March 2, 1986 by a Palestinian faction opposed to what they saw as his accommodation with the Israeli authorities. Tens of thousands of Palestinians gathered for his funeral procession, turning his death into the largest demonstration of Palestinian nationalism seen in Nablus since the death of Gamal Abdul Nasser in 1971.

In retrospect, his funeral procession was a preview of things to come. One year later, in December 1987, came the *intifadah*, the national uprising of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli occupation. Despite the best efforts of a militarily superior Israel, the uprising continues unabated today, the most important expression of Palestinian identity and self-expression since the great strike and national rebellion of 1936-39, when 100,000 Palestinians took to the streets.

Zafer al-Masri's life of 44 years is framed by these two pivotal episodes in the history of the Palestinian nation. In the final analysis, both his life and his death have provided

## PORTRAIT OF A PALESTINIAN

eloquent testimony to the dichotomy of humanism and brutality which have characterized the Palestinian national ordeal. At the same time, Zafer al-Masri symbolizes the hope of humanity for a peaceful resolution to the struggle over the land of Palestine.

In conferring the honorary degree upon Zafer al-Masri, Georgetown University did so “with profound respect and a deep sense of loss” for a man who “represented the essence of hope” for the Middle East and who “symbolized the perduring requirement for organizing civic affairs around men of wisdom, integrity, and compassion.” Zafer al-Masri was “a man of peace, a man dedicated to the well-being of all peoples, a man of the very highest civic virtues.” Georgetown University, with respect and admiration for his commitment to peace, proclaimed Zafer al-Masri Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa*.



BRITISH  
IMPERIAL POLICY  
AND THE  
JEWISH HOMELAND

An Historical Appraisal



Ibrahim Ibrahim



Except for “the extermination of the Tasmanians,” writes Janet Abu-Lughod, “modern history recognizes no cases in which the virtually complete supplanting of the indigenous population of a country by an alien stock has been achieved in as little as two generations. Yet this, in fact, is what has been attempted in Palestine since the beginning of the twentieth century.”<sup>1</sup>

How could this historical upheaval have come about? How was it possible for the Zionists, an alien, heterogeneous group of people, to conquer an already inhabited land, Palestine? How were they able to uproot and expel the Palestinians, and transform them into a camp-society, a nation of refugees subsisting on an indifferent world’s pittance? And why should Great Britain have sponsored the Zionist scheme to settle non-British subjects from Eastern Europe and Russia in Palestine against the wishes or aspirations of the Palestinians?

The answers to these questions demonstrate the incalculable force of the *raison d’etat* in British imperial policy. Zionism appealed to British statesmen because a Jewish-controlled state was seen as a useful future protector of British imperial interests in a crucial region of the world. It was neither Zionist influence in England nor the clamoring of public opinion that led to the Balfour Declaration, but rather the belief of British leaders in World War I that the rise of the Zionist movement offered new possibilities for the implementation of long-held British imperial aspirations concerning the Middle East.

The historical developments that have molded the question of Palestine are the focus of this paper. This choice of topic may be especially fitting in considering today's conflict over the land of Palestine, for it is history that determines the present, and it is history that will judge the past.

*1. The Jewish Homeland Idea before World War I*

Long before the World Zionist Organization was established by Theodor Herzl, a proposal for the establishment of Jewish settlements in Palestine had been advanced by a major British imperial statesman. In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when British and Ottoman interests were threatened by the power of Egypt's Muhammed Ali, Lord Palmerston had concluded that a Jewish presence in Palestine would be beneficial both to Britain and the Ottoman Sultan. On August 11, 1840, the same day that the British fleet expelled Muhammed Ali from Syria, Palmerston suggested to the Sultan that he should permit Jewish immigration into Palestine. In this way, Palmerston argued, the Ottoman Empire would be enriched by Jewish capital while, at the same time, the aggressive intentions of Muhammed Ali or his successor would be countered. He wrote:

There exists at present among the Jews dispersed over Europe, a strong notion that the time is approaching when their nation is to return to Palestine. . . . It is well known that the Jews of Europe possess great wealth, and it is manifest that any country in which a considerable number of them might choose to settle would derive great benefit from the riches which they would bring into it. . . . The Jewish people, if returning under the sanction and protection of the Sultan, would be a check upon any future evil designs of Mehemet Ali or his successor. . . . Even

if the encouragement held out by the Sultan to the Jews were not practically to lead to the settlement of any great number of them within the limits of the Ottoman Empire, still the promulgation of some law in their favour would spread a friendly disposition towards the Sultan among the Jews in Europe, and the Turkish Government must at once see how advantageous it would be to the Sultan's cause to create useful friends in many countries by a single edict.<sup>2</sup>

Despite all of Palmerston's efforts to persuade the Sultan to allow the Jews into Palestine and recognize them as British proteges, the Sultan remained steadfastly opposed to the suggestion. Moreover, at that time there was no significant group of Jews interested in supporting the idea by emigrating to Palestine. Indeed, Palmerston's argument that there existed among the Jews in Europe a strong wish to return to Palestine could not be proven, and should rather be seen as a ploy to promote his government's policy. As Lucien Wolfe, secretary of the Conjoint Committee representing Jews at the Foreign Office, wrote: "In 1840 . . . the future of Palestine was open to discussion. . . . Not a voice was raised among the Jews for the restoration of the land to them."<sup>3</sup>

Half a century later, the idea of Jewish migration to Palestine emerged once again, promoted this time by a Viennese journalist, Theodor Herzl, who was himself a Jew. The anti-Semitic mood in Europe at that time—the Dreyfus Affair of 1896 serves as a good example—had left a deep impression on him. In 1896 he published *Der Judenstaat*, in which he proposed the creation of a Jewish national home. This suggestion in Herzl's publication fell on fertile soil among Jewish students at European univer-

sities. It was met with approval in all those circles where the idea of a Jewish entity had become a matter of urgency because of the persecution of the Jews in Russia.

The history of Zionism begins in the year 1897, when the first Zionist Congress met in Basle, Switzerland, under Herzl's leadership, and gave birth to the Zionist movement, whose aim was to create a legally secure Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Zionists sought in vain for seven years to interest one of the Great Powers in this plan. Herzl was a friend of the Grand Duke of Baden and hoped that, with the aid of the Kaiser, the Turkish Sultan might be persuaded to help fulfill Zionist aspirations. Zionism needed a protector, argued Herzl, and Germany was best suited for the purpose.<sup>4</sup> However, the Kaiser's attempt to convince the Turkish ruler failed, and the Sultan remained opposed to Zionist ambitions.

Palestine seemed unattainable to Herzl as long as it remained under Ottoman rule. He therefore turned to Britain, hoping that an autonomous Jewish state might be created in the Sinai desert. This Sinai Plan should be seen as an intermediate step toward the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. As far as he was concerned, only Britain could now stand by the Zionists, and thus he aimed to ensure that Zionist interests merged with those of Britain. In a letter to Lord Rothschild, who was gradually warming to Zionist ideas, Herzl advanced the notion that the Sinai Plan was wholly in Britain's interests since British influence in the eastern Mediterranean would be strengthened "by a great colonization of our people at a nodal point of Egyptian and Indo-Persian interests."<sup>5</sup>

Herzl hoped to achieve Zionist aims by manipulating the rivalry among the Great Powers, especially between

Britain and France. For if Britain fulfilled Zionist aspirations, then the Jews would look after British interests in the Middle East. During negotiations with Joseph Chamberlain, then Colonial Minister, Herzl defended his argument that the Sinai Plan suited Britain, as it bolstered her power in Palestine: "We shall get it [Palestine] not from the goodwill, but from the jealousy of the powers! And once we are at El-Arish [Egypt] under the Union Jack, Palestine too will fall into the British sphere of influence."<sup>6</sup>

Herzl's argument greatly impressed the British statesman, who recalled Palmerston's old idea that the Jews might be used to serve British interests in Palestine and the Middle East in general. As Julian Amery, Chamberlain's biographer, wrote:

Herzl's arguments had undoubtedly made a deep impression on Chamberlain. Hitherto his interest in Zionism had been chiefly humanitarian. He now saw in it more positive opportunities for British policy. By supporting Zionism, Britain would enlist the sympathies of World Jewry on her behalf. She would also secure Jewish capital and settlers for the development of what was virtually British territory. Looking, moreover, to the future, a Jewish colony in Sinai might prove a useful instrument for extending British influence in Palestine proper, when the time came for the inevitable dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>7</sup>

The Sinai Plan failed, however, because of the stubborn opposition of Lord Cromer, who exerted all of his considerable influence against it, for its realization would have created many difficulties for the British administration in Egypt.<sup>8</sup>

In 1903 a new plan came to the fore to succeed the Sinai Plan: the British government proposed that the Zionists should establish an autonomous Jewish settlement in British East Africa. Herzl, who had in the course of time begun to abandon any hope of winning Palestine, felt attracted to this idea. He died, however, before reaching a decision. On July 30, 1905 the Uganda offer was rejected by the Seventh Zionist Congress, which was dominated by East European Jews deeply attached to traditional religious Zionism. The Congress declared that Palestine and the surrounding countries were to be settled. Anywhere else was out of the question.

## *2. World War I and the Balfour Declaration*

With the outbreak of the First World War the weight of the Zionist movement shifted from the European continent to Great Britain and the United States. Like all nationalist movements of the time, the Zionists sought to fulfill their aspirations through the war, and pinned their hopes on Great Britain, believing that Palestine might be liberated from Turkish domination and would then come under British control. The Zionist movement had already been recognized by Britain before the war. Even if Chamberlain's negotiations in 1902 and 1905 had not led to positive results, there still remained a reservoir of British sympathy toward the Zionists.

The traditional British policy, which favored the status quo in the Middle East and supported Ottoman rule, had collapsed on the very day the Turks allied themselves to the continental powers. The old rivalry among the Allies sprang up once more as they sought to carve out spheres of influence for themselves in the Ottoman Empire. Opposition was sharpest between France and Britain. Having been

shut out of Egypt, France had built up her position in Algeria during the nineteenth century. Through her occupation of Tunisia, France's influence in the Mediterranean had been strengthened. Now, in the hope that she could improve her position on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, France claimed that Syria should be recognized by the other rival powers as her sphere of interest. Indeed, since 1860 France had regarded Syria as her special reserve. Some French political commentators had even openly declared that the special interests of France extended to Palestine. During the first months of the war, Georges Leygues, a future prime minister of France, voiced the opinion that the whole of Syria, which included Palestine and Transjordan, should fall to France. In a speech in October 1914 he explained: "The Mediterranean will not be free for us . . . unless Syria remains in our sphere of influence. By Syria must be understood, not a Syria mutilated and discrowned, but Syria in its entirety, that which extends from El Arish to the Taurus."<sup>9</sup>

For Great Britain, however, the significance of Palestine had already increased after the occupation of Egypt. Its strategic position, on the one hand, as a country neighboring the Suez Canal, and, on the other, as a land route to the Persian Gulf area, had long made it an important consideration in British strategy. The further the British penetrated into the Persian Gulf area, the more important it became to find a base on the eastern Mediterranean coast. Before the outbreak of the First World War, during his term of office in Egypt, Lord Kitchener had made frequent representations to Whitehall about "the geographical importance of southern Syria for the British Empire . . . from the Haifa-Acre bay on the Mediterranean to the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea, both as a bulwark to the Suez Canal and as an overland highway to the East."<sup>10</sup> When he

later joined the War Cabinet, his ideas carried more weight. In the report of the "de Bunsen Committee," formed in 1915 by the prime minister, Lord Asquith, to define the British and French spheres of interest in the Middle East, it was recommended that France should limit her influence to northern Syria and not be allowed to extend it to Palestine. "Palestine must be recognized as a country whose destiny must be the subject of special negotiation in which belligerents and neutrals are alike interested."<sup>11</sup>

From that point onward, the British negotiator Sir Mark Sykes began proprietary discussions with his French colleague François Picot on the Middle East. The Palestine question was vigorously debated, for France steadfastly clung to her opinion that Palestine was part of Syria and therefore part of the French sphere of influence. The British point of view, supported by Russia, was that Palestine, as the "Holy Land," was a matter of concern for many countries and should therefore be considered a special case. In the secret agreement eventually reached between Sykes and Picot, French interests were to predominate in Syria. Upon the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, however, Palestine was to devolve to international control. Nonetheless, Britain was granted the Mediterranean ports of Haifa and Acre.<sup>12</sup>

The French-British understanding on Palestine established in the Sykes-Picot Agreement did not last very long. From the beginning of the war, the Zionist leadership and sympathetic members of the British establishment had been promoting an alternative plan to make Palestine a Jewish homeland. Seizing on Herzl's old thesis that the Zionist movement could win Palestine by exploiting the rivalry between the Great Powers, Zionist leaders began to express public criticism of French claims on Palestine. Sir Herbert

Samuel (later Viscount Samuel), a British Jew and member of Asquith's War Cabinet, warned of the dangers of abandoning Palestine. Like Kitchener, Samuel stressed the significance of Palestine for the British Empire in his memorandum to the members of the Cabinet; Palestine was not only adjacent to the Suez Canal but was also a land route to the East. Turkey's entry into the war against Britain had altered the very nature of the stakes in the Middle East.

"The moment Turkey entered the war, the position was entirely changed," wrote Samuel. "If Palestine was to be given a new destiny, Great Britain, with her important strategic interests in the Middle East, was directly concerned. The question who was to succeed the Turk in controlling that country that bordered on the Suez Canal was one to which our Government would have to give serious consideration."<sup>13</sup> He pointed out the danger that Palestine could fall to another European power (France), for the establishment of a great European power close to the Suez Canal would be a continual and formidable menace to the essential lines of communication of the British Empire.<sup>14</sup>

According to Samuel's plan, Palestine should be annexed by the British Government and Jewish immigration permitted so as to transform the country into a Jewish state which would be part of the British Empire. This Jewish state would serve as a buffer state between the Suez Canal and (the presumably French) Syria.<sup>15</sup>

Although Samuel's argument made no impression on Asquith,<sup>16</sup> and the military situation in the Middle East remained undecided, the argument laid the foundations of Zionist propaganda both within British political circles and among the organs of public opinion. Dr. Chaim Weizmann, chairman of the Zionist Committee in England,

took up Samuel's argument and began to publicize it. Through Zionist supporter C.P. Scott, publisher of the *Manchester Guardian*, the Zionist idea began to gain ground in Britain. In an important newspaper article, Herbert Sidebotham, a colleague of Scott's and one of the leading British protagonists of Zionism, pleaded the case for the restoration of Palestine to the Jews along the lines conceived by Samuel. Britain should annex Palestine permanently, so as to be able to defend Egypt; furthermore, the creation of a Jewish buffer state between the Suez Canal and the north was essential. As Sidebotham wrote in 1915: "We are not setting up Egypt as a rival base of operations to any other place in the East if we recognize that in the long run there can be no satisfactory defence of Egypt or the Suez Canal so long as Palestine is in the occupation of a hostile or possibly hostile Power." He went on to say, "If Palestine were now a buffer state between Egypt and the north, inhabited as it used to be by an intensely patriotic race [the Jews], . . . the problem of Egypt in this war would be a very light one. . . . Palestine must either be a part of Egypt (which it is not, neither geographically nor racially), or it must be a buffer state which is prevented from becoming hostile to Egypt. On the realization of that condition depends the whole future of the British Empire as a sea Empire."<sup>17</sup>

Following Asquith's government, Lloyd George formed a new Cabinet with James Balfour as foreign minister. Both politicians had voiced their enthusiasm for the Zionist cause through the liberal press. Zionism was supported especially by younger politicians, by the so-called "enlightened imperialists" such as Leopold Amery, William Ormsby-Gore and Sir Mark Sykes, who occupied key positions in the War Cabinet. They viewed the realization of these goals as deline-

ated by Sidebotham as the key to furtherance of British interests in the East.

While Weizmann, with Scott's help, won the sympathy of Lloyd George and strengthened his influence in British higher political circles, an American Zionist, Supreme Court Justice Louis D. Brandeis, exercised considerable influence on the American president, Woodrow Wilson, and succeeded in winning his sympathy for the Zionist cause.<sup>18</sup> At that time Britain's main concern was securing the entry of the United States into the war, since Russia and France had been exhausted by three years of battle. As Lloyd George noted later (in 1936):

At the time the French army had mutinied, the Italian Army was on the eve of collapse and America had hardly started preparing in earnest. There was nothing left but Britain confronting the most powerful military combination the world has ever seen. . . . We came to the conclusion from information we received from every part of the world, that it was vital we should have the sympathies of the Jewish community. . . in these circumstances and on the advice we received, we decided that it was most desirable to secure the sympathy and cooperation of that most remarkable community, the Jews throughout the world. They were helpful in America and in Russia, which at that moment was just walking out and leaving us alone.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Britain expected that American Jews would influence Wilson to bring America into the war on the side of the allies.

Toward the end of October 1916 Weizmann submitted a memorandum to the British government in which the demands of the Zionists with regard to Palestine were set

out. This was to serve as the basis for the Balfour Declaration, and later for the Mandate. In this memorandum, the program for the Jewish resettlement of Palestine was drawn up in accordance with the aims of the Zionist movement. According to the program, the British government should recognize the Jewish population of Palestine (present and future) as a nation; it should accept the full and absolute right of the Jews of the world to settle in Palestine; and, finally, it should permit the establishment of a Jewish corporation for the colonization of Palestine by the Jews.<sup>20</sup>

On the basis of this memorandum Sir Mark Sykes began to negotiate with the Zionists on the subject of Palestine. He agreed unconditionally to their demands. The real difficulty, it appeared to him, was France, for the French demanded Syria and also wanted to discuss Palestine. To Sykes, the problem of the Arabs seemed also to be serious. There was a rising Arab nationalist movement, he told Weizmann. "Within a generation," he predicted, "the movement would come into its own, for the Arabs had intelligence, vitality and linguistic unity." At the same time, however, the problem of the Arabs seemed to both partners to be easy to overcome; an understanding could be reached between them, "particularly if they received Jewish support in other matters."<sup>21</sup>

After winning Sykes' approval, Weizmann would have been able to make his plan a reality,<sup>22</sup> had it not been for the serious opposition of non-Zionists, that is, of assimilated Jews, toward Zionism. As Weizmann testified bitterly in his autobiography, *Trial and Error*, the Zionists in Britain were never popular among the well-established and long-assimilated Jewish community. As he candidly put it, they looked "upon Zionism as, at best, the empty dream of a few misguided idealists."<sup>23</sup> The Jews in Britain rejected

Zionism<sup>24</sup> and stiffly opposed the creation of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine.

Indeed, they felt that the creation of a secular Jewish nationality might cast doubts on their own status as British citizens. Even during 1916, when Zionist propaganda was at its most intense, Jewish opponents drew up a rival plan in which no sovereign Jewish state was demanded, but merely the recognition of the civil rights of the Jews in Palestine. In their memorandum to the Foreign Office, the "Conjoint Committee of the Jewish Board of Deputies in Great Britain" demanded the following: "... The Jewish population (in Palestine) will be secured in the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty, equal political rights with the rest of the population, reasonable facilities for immigration and colonisation, and such municipal privileges in the towns and colonies inhabited by them as may be shown to be necessary."<sup>25</sup> Although Weizmann succeeded in overcoming the more moderate non-Zionist elements through new elections among these Jewish bodies, the opposition of assimilated Jews had its effect on Britain's promises to the Zionists, and the original Zionist conception had to be modified.

The first draft of the Balfour Declaration was prepared in July 1917 by the Zionist Commission at the behest of Balfour, and was then presented to the Foreign Office. The earlier demands of the Zionists were formulated in this draft:

H.M. Government, after considering the aims of the Zionist Organisation, accepts the principle of recognising Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish people and the right of the Jewish people to build up its national life in Palestine under a protection to be established at the conclusion of Peace. . . .

H.M. Government regards as essential for the realisation of this principle the grant of internal autonomy to the Jewish nationality in Palestine, freedom of immigration for Jews, and the establishment of a Jewish National Colonising Corporation for the resettlement and economic development of the country.

The conditions and forms of the internal autonomy and a charter for the Jewish National Colonising Corporation should . . . be elaborated in detail and determined with the representatives of the Zionist Organisation.<sup>26</sup>

The Balfour Declaration would have been a clear and unambiguous formulation of advocacy of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine had it not been for the opposition of two members of the Cabinet who rejected the Zionist draft, albeit for different reasons.

The first was Lord Curzon, who was well acquainted with the East, and who raised the question of the Palestinian Arabs for the first time. He believed this declaration of sympathy for the Zionists to be unrealistic; it would only confuse the implementation of British policy. He argued that Palestine belonged to the Arabs, who had lived there for centuries, and who would "not be content either to be expropriated for Jewish immigrants or to act merely as hewers of wood and drawers of water for the latter."<sup>27</sup> Curzon doubted whether the creation of a Jewish national home was feasible under these circumstances. The second was Edwin Montagu, a prominent Jew and Secretary of State for India, who saw in such a declaration a threat to the status not only of British Jews, but also to that of all Jews of the Diaspora. "All my life," he is reported to have

told Lloyd George, "I have been trying to get out of the ghetto. You want to force me back there (in Palestine)!"<sup>28</sup> Lloyd George and Balfour were able to overcome their opposition by pointing to the danger of a "Turco-German" declaration of sympathy with Zionism, "which had no foundation in fact. . . ." Moreover, a British declaration was seen as a useful instrument of propaganda for the cause of the alliance in America.<sup>29</sup>

Following fundamental modification of the Zionist draft, the Cabinet accepted a final draft of the Balfour Declaration and delivered it to the Zionist Commission through Lord Rothschild on November 2, 1917. In this declaration Britain promised the Zionists that they would give consideration to the creation of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, as long as this did not adversely affect the civil and religious rights of existing "non-Jewish communities" [the Arab majority] in Palestine.<sup>30</sup>

The Balfour Declaration offered significantly less than what the Zionists had demanded. For while the Zionists had hoped to obtain the whole of Palestine for the establishment of their national home, the declaration promised only that Britain would strive to achieve the creation of such a home there; thus in no way did the Balfour Declaration regard Palestine as the Jewish national home. In fact, to accommodate Montagu's opposition a condition was inserted, stipulating that the rights and political convictions of the Jews of the Diaspora were not to be affected by the declaration. In deference to Curzon's opposition, the civil and religious rights of non-Jews (i.e., the Arabs) were stressed quite clearly.

The ambiguity of the Balfour Declaration arose as a result of the opposition of Curzon and Montagu: it was formulated so as to seek a compromise between pro-Zionists

and their opponents. Leopold Amery, who drafted what was to become the Balfour Declaration, outlined the challenge to Lord Milner: "Could I draft something which would go a reasonable distance to meeting the objectors, both Jewish and pro-Arab, without impairing the substance of the proposed declaration?"<sup>31</sup> The vague terminology and non-committal nature of the promise was inspired by Curzon's diplomatic caution: "We should be guarded in the language used in giving expression to such sympathy."<sup>32</sup> This ambiguity in the declaration would in future both determine British policy and confuse the Arab public during the period of the Mandate.

### *3. Zionism and the British Mandate: A Change in Alliances*

It is evident that the convergence of British imperial interests with those of Zionism was a marriage of convenience. Albert Hourani, commenting on George Antonius, has crystallized the matter:

"... the British Government and the Zionists found they had a common interest: the British wished to prevent any potential rival acquiring a position of power in Palestine, so close to the Suez Canal, while the Zionists wanted a powerful patron. They were thus able to reach an agreement, by which Great Britain would support the Zionist idea and the Zionists would ask for British protection."<sup>33</sup>

The tremendous success of the Zionists in 1917 and thereafter cannot, however, be fully understood without considering another important factor: the absence of the Arab from Western consciousness. "A land without a people for a people without a land," the famous Zangwillian utterance, was seldom questioned by Westerners. On the contrary, the British, despite the fact that they knew much

more than any Zionist leader about Palestine, its Arab population and its Arab culture, acted precisely in the spirit of the statement. Otherwise, how can one explain the phraseology of the Balfour Declaration, and later that of the Mandate, which referred to the Arabs of Palestine, at that time constituting more than 90 percent of the population, as the “non-Jewish communities.” And surely it could not be expected that the leaders of the empire, the generation of Cecil Rhodes, would look on the Arabs as human beings possessing rights like others. What mattered instead for that generation was the right of “Western man”—his right to invade, conquer, expand and colonize, irrespective of the wishes and aspirations of the native inhabitants. “‘Expansion is everything,’ said Cecil Rhodes, and fell into despair, for every night he saw overhead ‘these stars . . . these vast worlds, which we can never reach. I would annex the planets if I could.’” The Balfour Declaration was a by-product of the age of imperialism in which “the Rights of Englishmen” prevailed over the “Rights of Men.”<sup>34</sup>

The Zionist leadership understood how to mold the contours of their schemes to fit into those of their sponsors: Herzl’s *Diaries* and Weizmann’s *Memoirs* are the best evidence of their sensitivity to German and British imperialistic interests and designs. In other words, neither the Zionists nor their masters were acting in opposition to the *Zeitgeist*. Consider, for example, this statement made by Balfour in 1919:

The contradiction between the letter of the Covenant [the Anglo-French Declaration of 1918 promising the Arabs of former Ottoman colonies that as a reward for supporting the Allies they could have their independence] is even more flagrant in the case of the independent nation of Palestine than in that of the independent nation of Syria. For in Pal-

estine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country, though the American Commission has been going through the forms of asking what they are. The four great powers are committed to Zionism and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desire and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land. In my opinion that is right.<sup>35</sup>

Nor was the League of Nations any different in its attitude; it not only endorsed the Balfour Declaration but transformed it from a mere British promise into a respectable, internationally-binding pronouncement to be implemented by the British under the auspices of that "international" body.

Three decades of British direct rule of Palestine and of Arab resistance to Zionism did not correct the picture in London. The British were persistent in their support of Zionism, adhering to the ultimate aim of establishing the Jewish state. Thus, when Arabs resorted to armed resistance in 1936, the British suppressed them and systematically crushed their leadership. It is true that, for obvious reasons, the British Government took cognizance in 1939 of some of the grievances of the Arabs; nonetheless, the White Paper of 1939 did not fully recognize the basic rights of the Arab population, such as self-determination, nor did it repudiate the Balfour Declaration, which, as mentioned, downplayed the existence of the Arab majority in Palestine.

In the final analysis, the White Paper did not affect the Zionist position in Palestine: from 1939 until the end of

the Mandate the Arabs remained silenced if not suppressed, while the Zionists were forming, training and arming their forces under the "British Shield."<sup>36</sup> The large number of well-trained combat forces which they committed to the battle of 1947-48 is the best evidence that the one-sided British policy had worked consistently in their favor.

The irony is that, despite Great Britain's role as architect of the Jewish state, the Zionist movement was quick to seek a more powerful protector once the British Empire appeared to be on the verge of decline. Just as during World War I the Zionists shifted their political base from Berlin to London, reflecting the shift in the political dynamic of the time, so, too, in 1941 they decided to shift from London to Washington. This decision was based on rational calculations and proved to be farsighted and of great consequence for the future of Palestine and for the future of Zionism as well. The Zionists had correctly foreseen the beginning of the end of British dominance on the world stage, including the Middle East, and the rise of the United States as the major world power and hence the alternative to Britain.

Another factor which was on the minds of the Zionist leadership was the Jewish community in America and its future role in the Zionist movement. American Jews, still remembering their ghettos and suffering in eastern and central European countries, responded favorably to Zionism which, in the final analysis, was an outgrowth of their eastern European history and environment. Their expectations about Washington were also fulfilled: the U.S. emerged from the war as the greatest world power, and proved to be more sympathetic and responsive to Zionism than was Britain, as is best revealed by President Truman, who acted as midwife in the creation of Israel.

The shift from London to Washington can be seen as the logical consequence of an attempt to win over the recently naturalized and steadily growing numbers of American Jews, who were thought to be more responsive and amenable to Zionist propaganda than their co-religionists in Britain. This reasoning also proved to be correct.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, while Great Britain in 1917 had supported Zionist claims to Palestine for reasons of her own, in 1948 it was the United States which helped in the creation of Israel. But, neither in 1917 nor in 1948 were the Palestinians themselves allowed to share in the common right of all peoples to their historical identity and self-determination.

Today, 40 years after the rise of Israel, the Palestinians remain under occupation, trapped between Zionism and American *Realpolitik*. Indeed, ironically, they are still the *personae non gratae* of the Question of Palestine.

## NOTES

1. Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Demographic Transformation of Palestine," in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.), *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 139.

2. Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London: Vallentine-Mitchell, 1961), p. 6.

3. Lucien Wolfe, *Diplomatic History of the Jewish Question* (London: Longmans, 1919), p. 102, quoted in Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

4. Raphael Patai (ed.), *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, Vol. II (London: The Herzl Press, 1960), trans. by Harry Zohn, pp. 656-660.

5. *Op. cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 1309.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 1474.

7. Julian Amery, *Life of Chamberlain*, Vol. IV (London: Hutchinson, 1951), p. 265.

8. Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
10. George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (Beirut: Khayat, n.d.), pp. 236-237.
11. Cmd. 5974 of 1939, Annex J, p. 51, quoted in J. Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate* (London: The Cresset Press, 1959), pp. 17-18.
12. J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, Vol. II, *A Documentary Record, 1914-1956* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1958), p. 19.
13. Viscount Samuel, *Memoirs* (London: The Cresset Press, 1945), p. 139.
14. John Bowle, *Viscount Samuel: A Biography* (London, 1957), p. 174.
15. Samuel, *op. cit.*, p. 144.
16. Asquith even showed his disdain openly, making the scornful comment: "The only other partisan of this proposal is Lloyd George, who, I need not say, does not care a damn for the Jews or their past or future, but thinks it will be an outrage to let the holy places pass into the possession or under the protectorate of 'agnostic, atheistic France.'" Cited by Samuel, *ibid.*, p. 143.
17. Herbert Sidebotham, *Great Britain and Palestine* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1937), pp. 26-27.
18. Ben Halpern writes: "Brandeis' influence was powerful enough in American postwar planning, in which he was one of Wilson's closest advisers, so that the scholars who briefed the American delegation drew up a plan for Palestine fully in accord with Zionist demands." *The Idea of the Jewish State*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 281.
19. Hansard: House of Commons, Vol. 313, Col. 1341-1342, June 19, 1936.
20. Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), pp. 186-187.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
22. On May 17 Weizmann addressed a meeting of the Zionist Federation in London: "I am entitled to state . . . that H.M.G. is ready to support our plans. . . . While the creation of a Jewish commonwealth is our final ideal . . . the way to achieve it lies through a series of intermediary stages. . . . Under the wing of this Power [Great Britain] Jews will be able to develop and to set up the administrative machinery which, while not interfering with the legitimate interests of the non-Jewish population, will enable us to carry out the Zionist scheme." N. Sokolow, *History of Zionism*, Vol. II (London: Longmans, Green, 1919), p. 56, quoted in Marlowe, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

23. Weizmann, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-164.
25. Sidebotham, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-57.
26. Hurewitz, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
27. Quoted in Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 545.
28. Quoted in Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George, His Life and Time* (London: Hutchinson, 1954), p. 427.
29. A.L. Tibawi, *Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine, 1914-1921* (London: Luzac and Company, Ltd., 1978), p. 211.
30. Hurewitz, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
31. Quoted in Leopold S. Amery, *My Political Life, 1914-1929*, Vol. II (London: Hutchinson, 1953), p. 116. Amery later served as Colonial Secretary.
32. Quoted in Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 546.
33. Albert Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 208.
34. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1967), p. 124.
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36. Walid Khalidi, "Introduction," in Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), p. xlii.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. xlviii-liii.

A RIFT  
IN THEIR SOULS

The Palestinians in Exile



Janet Abu-Lughod



It is virtually impossible to determine exactly how many persons of Palestinian birth or ancestry exist today. Our best estimate, based upon some fairly complex demographic studies conducted in 1980 and projected from that point, is that at least 5.2 million people now count their descent from the 1.4 million Arabs who resided in Palestine in 1948, when Israel was established.

It has been conventional in U.S. policy, following Israeli practice, to refer to these people as "Arabs" rather than as Palestinians. Sharp distinctions also have been drawn between the subgroups which, by accident of initial relocation or birth, now reside within different administrative jurisdictions and carry different passports. To some extent, the title of this conference, "Palestinians under Occupation," itself unfortunately endorses this fragmentation of the national community by attempting to isolate Palestinians living in the West Bank from the larger issues that concern the entire community. Such a partial focus merely obscures the issue and hinders the search for a workable solution to a conflict which has persisted for at least four decades. As I shall argue here, *all* Palestinians now exist in a painful state of physical and/or cultural exile, even those who never became refugees in the official sense of that term. Thus, no resolution to the conflict will be forthcoming unless and until the dilemmas of *all* are addressed.

Never before has this been as evident as it is today. Although the phenomena of uprisings in Jerusalem, on the West Bank and in Gaza are not new, their cumulative magnitude is wholly different, as is the press coverage.<sup>1</sup>

These events are not only linked to one another but also to the sympathetic, albeit milder, insurrections within pre-1967 Israel by third-class carriers of Israeli passports. Nor are the well-organized protests on Palestinian soil independent of the leadership and rank and file outside, although hardly in the sense alleged by President Reagan's references to outside agitators.

The unrealistic Israeli hope that the people they displaced would just "melt away" has proven unfounded. The short-sighted Israeli and U.S. policy, predicated upon the equally unrealistic hope that those whom Israel ruled would eventually grow quiescent and apathetic, and adjust to their powerlessness, has also proven illusory. The current times of trouble are a sobering reminder that misdiagnosis of a problem—whether innocent or intentional—leads to no cure. It is time, therefore, to reevaluate and rediagnose.

The starting point for such rethinking is the recognition that Palestinians are neither migrants, nor displaced persons, nor even refugees: they are exiles at home and abroad. Edward Said, in a sensitive article in *Atlantic* entitled "Winter of the Mind," has defined exile as "an unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home."<sup>2</sup> He characterized exile existentially as a condition of "terminal loss" caused by a "discontinuous state of being." In this sense, Palestinians suffer from exile, whether they have remained on their own soil, helplessly—and now not so helplessly—witnessing its transformation into an alien "place," whether they live restively under a cruel occupation, or whether they live in physical exile, in hardship or ease, with a primal attachment to a home most have never known.<sup>3</sup> The persistence of this fierce attachment in the face of pious hopes for its disappearance may be difficult for Americans

to understand, but it is a social fact that can be ignored only at peril.

Even though Palestinians of all kinds consider themselves exiles, it is necessary to distinguish among the various types of Palestinian exiles in order to understand not only what they have in common but also the ways in which their different circumstances have created special problems. Today, five major groups can be identified.

### *1. Arabs in Israel*

There are now more than 600,000 Palestinian Arabs within the pre-1967 "provisional" borders of Israel. These are remnants or descendants of the approximately 130,000 Palestinian Arabs who remained within Israel during the war of 1948 and were thus counted as "legal residents" in the Israeli Defense Census of November 1948. After an interim period, during which they were victims of considerable displacement and very harsh military control, they received partial rights as Israeli citizens. While they remain on their native soil (although not necessarily in their ancestral homes or villages, some of which have been destroyed or taken over by new Jewish immigrants), they experience exclusion from the wider society and suffer discrimination in education, employment and the right to buy land. They constitute an anomaly in a political system that recognizes only Jews as full members of the social and political community. They are the "exiles at home" par excellence. While at first this community was psychologically crushed and passively fearful, many have been radicalized since 1967, largely because they have reestablished contact with the second group of Palestinian Arabs from whom they were cut off for two decades. They have been increasingly mobilized by the effect of the *intifadah* on the West Bank and Gaza.

## *2. Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza*

In 1948, approximately 780,000 Palestinians became "refugees" from the zones occupied by Israel. Most joined their compatriots (who perhaps numbered some 525,000) in the residual areas of Palestine, later called the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. From the former zone, however, many continued their search for refuge, crossing into Syria, Lebanon and especially Jordan.

By the eve of the 1967 war, there were approximately 900,000 Palestinian Arabs living in East Jerusalem and the hill areas to the north and south (i.e., the West Bank) in the zone which had been annexed to Jordan. There were about another 450,000 living in the Gaza Strip, an area that had come under Egyptian administration after 1948. The inhabitants of these territories thus totalled some 1.35 million. After the war of June 1967, in which Israel invaded and conquered these zones, there were only about 950,000 of these residents left in both districts, which suggests that perhaps another 300-400,000 Palestinians had been driven from the area by the war. Some of these became refugees for the second time in their lives.

Today, some two decades after the West Bank and Gaza Strip came under Israeli military rule, the number of Palestinian Arabs in these occupied zones has barely recovered to the pre-war level, which suggests that there has been significant and steady attrition in their ranks.<sup>4</sup> Some of this attrition has come directly through expulsion, incarceration and violent death, perpetrated by a harsh military government and vigilante Jewish settlers. Much, however, has been forced by economic necessity.

Life on the West Bank has been very difficult and sur-

vival in the now grossly overpopulated Gaza Strip even harder. Those who managed to remain are known as "the steadfast" (*al-Samidun*). They have been resisting expulsion and trying to survive under a ruthless military occupation, with neither citizenship rights nor the protection of the state. Indeed, the Israeli authorities have enforced systematic confiscation of their land, destruction of their property, and harassment and imprisonment under draconian regulations. Although the inhabitants of these territories are neither physical nor juridical exiles (except those who had been displaced in 1948), they are subject to the harshest assaults on their existence. Unlike their compatriots in Israel, they have managed under difficult circumstances to maintain much of their kin and social structure. What they have not been able to maintain is their self-sufficiency. Deprived of land and water and prevented from establishing their own institutions and economic enterprises, much of the labor force of former peasants, businessmen and professionals has been proletarianized. To provide sustenance to their families, many have taken low-paid and "informal" employment within Israel, their low wages thereby subsidizing the economy of their occupiers.

Alienation and ambivalence have taken their toll on many. These tensions have clearly been among the underlying precipitants of the present revolt. It is in this context that the current strikes, the attacks on buses carrying workers into Israel and the resignations of officials collaborating with the occupation must be viewed. It may also be that the ongoing strain has recently been brought to a head by increased labor blockages in the Arab states of the Gulf, where opportunities for emigration have declined precipitously with the drop in oil prices. And finally, clearly these difficulties have all been exacerbated by the implanting of

alien Israeli "settlements" with their associated vigilantism on Palestinian soil.

### *3. Palestinians in Contiguous Arab Countries*

Living outside Palestine today are another two million Palestinians who reside in the Arab countries just beyond its borders: over 700,000 in Lebanon and Syria, where most are non-citizens, and perhaps 1.3 million in Jordan where they were granted citizenship in 1949, along with residents of the so-called West Bank. Since the Jordanian government, unlike the Syrian or Lebanese, has discouraged Palestinians from maintaining their separate identity, there is no way to determine exactly how many Jordanians living on the East Bank or working abroad (largely in the Arab Gulf states) are of Palestinian origin. This estimate of Palestinians in Jordan is therefore highly provisional.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 sharply reversed any process of "adaptation" of Palestinians in that country, even of the least marginalized. It also served as a frightening warning to Palestinians in Syria and Jordan that weak states were neither committed to nor capable of defending them from the Israeli army. It is perhaps ironic that the subsequent intensification of Palestinianism was one of the unintended consequences of an invasion which had been intended to destroy its political expression.

### *4. Palestinians in the Gulf States*

From points of second settlement, Palestinians seeking a livelihood also established temporary communities of third settlement in other Arab countries. This was especially the case in countries of the Gulf area where their labor was demanded—primarily Kuwait, but also Saudi Arabia and

the United Arab Emirates. At the peak of employment opportunities in these areas in the 1970s, the number of Palestinians living and working in the Gulf (and other non-contiguous Arab countries such as Iraq, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) may have reached as many as three-quarters of a million. There have, however, been recent drops in these levels as a result of retrenchment following the decline in oil prices.

Palestinians in these places have tended to reconstitute social communities in exile, but their hold on their new homes has remained precarious. With few exceptions they have not been granted citizenship, and their right to remain as residents has been conditioned on their labor contributions. Upon retirement they must leave, and their children, even those born and brought up in the country of temporary residence, have no guaranteed right to remain behind. As the economies of the oil states contract, and as natives of these countries are trained to replace foreign workers, Palestinians without citizenship will no longer be welcomed. This has, indeed, already begun to occur. Many Palestinians are returning to the East Bank of Jordan where the economy is in crisis, and Palestinians from Gaza have nowhere to go.<sup>5</sup> Thus, whereas the "strangeness" of exile may be modified in these countries of common language and heritage, there remains the underlying anxiety of impermanence.

##### *5. Palestinians Abroad*

A growing number of Palestinians now live in non-Arab countries where their Palestinian identity is kept alive, sometimes through the transplanting of local communities via chain migration and/or sometimes by political mobilization and ethnic organizations. As many as half a million

Palestinians may now be living under these conditions—a phenomenon which has become increasingly common since the early 1970s. Some among them have detached themselves from the ethnic community and assimilated, but the remarkable fact is that the overwhelming majority of them have not. Even the most assimilated who have established themselves professionally in their lands of adoption still retain (as does Edward Said himself) a gnawing sense of exile.

## 6. *A Look to the Future*

What can be done, given the persistence of what has been called “the Palestinian problem,” which is often attributed to the intransigent and irrational refusal of the Palestinian Arabs to behave as temporary refugees seeking resettlement, rather than as exiles suffering from an unhealed “rift in their souls”? In this paper I have argued that a long-term process has evolved which has been basically misdiagnosed, even by well-meaning persons seeking a humane solution to the “Palestinian refugee problem.” Until the situation of the 5.2 million Palestinian Arabs is properly conceptualized and understood, solutions will continue to evade us.

Two approaches are needed. First, a place must be provided for the restoration of Palestinian society on Palestinian soil if those exiles who find themselves “strangers at home” are not only to escape their status as a conquered people but also to make progress in healing the rift in their very being. Second, Palestinian exiles abroad must be offered the option of returning to their native soil and society. With those two options available, Palestinians may once again be regarded as refugees rather than exiles. That would allow them to relinquish their status as exiles, a sad

heritage they have guarded for 40 years and passed on to their children, and to begin to move out of the state of psychological limbo which has prevented any viable and directed movement for the community as a whole in the past.

I would argue that the difference between a refugee and an exile is the existence of just such an option of return. Until Palestinians can exercise an option either to return home to a real society or to relinquish this right as individuals, rather than as members of a collectivity (and there is no reason to believe that all or even most would choose to return), it is unlikely that the “problem” can be resolved peacefully. Events of the past year in particular on the West Bank, in Gaza and within Israel lend an urgency to this choice which would be in the interests not only of the Palestinians but of the U.S. and Israel as well. For this propitious moment in the history of this terrible “problem,” made possible by the uprising itself, offers a unique opportunity. Let us hope it will not be lost. In the past, each time an opportunity has been presented and missed, conditions have worsened and the prospect for resolution has dimmed. Palestinians intend to go home—either with a compromise or, lacking that, without it. It is in our best interests as Americans to see that they can go home again.

## NOTES

1. The Israeli government reported 10,871 “disturbances of the peace” between 1977 and 1984 while, more recently, over 7,100 “cases” were reported in just two years, between mid-1985 and mid-1987. See Allan Nairn’s “Occupation” in the *Village Voice*, March 1, 1988.

2. Said’s article appeared in April 1985. The distinction I am making

here is between a migrant (a voluntary mover), a refugee or displaced person (a collective legal definition that carries at least the right of return), and an exile (a forced emigrant denied the right of repatriation). See my "Palestinians: Exiles at Home and Abroad" in a special issue on refugees, *Current Sociology* (October 1988), pp. 61-69.

3. By my calculations, some 80 percent of the people who today identify themselves as Palestinians have never lived on the soil and in the authentic "home" culture of Palestine.

4. Had there been no displacement, the 1967 population would have doubled through natural increase in the interim.

5. Jordan has recently conferred citizenship on a small number of these stateless Palestinians but this is unlikely to resolve the dilemma of most.

# THE WEST BANK NOW

## Economic Development



Roger Owen



When the organizers of this conference began to think about its title and its structure, they could not have imagined that it would actually take place at the end of the third month of an all-out Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Nor could they have imagined that early in the uprising, another al-Masri, Bashar Ahmad, would also be killed in Nablus, this time by Israeli soldiers.

The uprising, or *intifadah*, casts a great shadow across our discussions. Not only has it developed into a fierce struggle for hegemony between the Israeli army and the entire Palestinian population of the territories, but it has already produced irrevocable changes in Palestinian organization and consciousness so that, whatever happens, things will never be the same again.

These circumstances dictate a somewhat different, less academic, more political approach from the one I might have adopted before the uprising began in December 1987. I will take as my major theme that of development and resistance under occupation, with particular reference to the dynamic version of *sumud* (steadfastness) which began about 1980 and did so much to prepare the way for the uprising via its insistence on the creation of local committees and on local self-help. However, I must begin with a quick, general, historical introduction so as to be able to place these changes in their proper context.

### 1. *Recent History of the Economies*

The West Bank and, what is less well-known, the district around Gaza formed the economic heartland of Otto-

man Palestine. However, the center of gravity began to shift slowly toward the coastal towns of Jaffa and Haifa during the British Mandate. By the Second World War it was here that the most dynamic, wealth-creating sections of the economy were to be found. The division of the country between Israel and Jordan in 1948-50 constituted a considerable step backward: it cut the West Bank off from the fast-growing markets along the coast and wrenched it round into union with the much more backward Jordanian economy to the east. Meanwhile, the Gaza Strip, coming under Egyptian administration, was completely isolated from the rest of Palestine and, in addition, had to cope with a huge influx of refugees which heavily outnumbered the local population.

There was a second great shock in 1967 when, as a result of Israel's comprehensive military victory, the West Bank and Gaza were forcibly drawn away from Jordan and Egypt and, once again, reunited with all of old Palestine, now under total Israeli control. Finally, with the implementation of General Dayan's "open bridges" policy, the West Bank regained contact with the lands across the Jordan river, but only at the cost of finding itself squeezed between two more powerful national economic units, Israel and Jordan, with little power to affect the terms of its exchanges with either.

Nevertheless, there was something of a mini-boom in the first years of the occupation, due largely to the introduction of new crops which found new markets in Jordan and the Arab world beyond. However, this began to peter out in the mid-1970s and by the end of the decade the West Bank was encountering severe economic difficulties as a result of two powerful factors. One was Israel's policy of colonization, which led to a considerable loss of agricul-

tural land and water and to an increasing number of direct restrictions on what could be grown, exported or marketed across the Green Line that divided Israel from the occupied territories. The other was the influence of some of Israel's own growing economic problems, notably the rapid spurt in inflation from 1974 onward.

President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, and the Camp David Agreement which followed in September 1978, ushered in yet another period of significant change. As is well known, the Begin government responded to these events rhetorically by offering limited autonomy for the Palestinian people, and practically by stepping up the process of colonization by the establishment of many more settlements and the seizure of much more land. At the same time, there was an important counter-response from the Arab regimes which allocated large sums of money for the West Bank and Gaza to be distributed through a joint Palestinian/Jordanian committee, as well as from many western governments and aid agencies which, for one reason or another, increased the amount of humanitarian and development assistance targeted specifically on the occupied territories.

This was the time of *sumud* in its first, more passive version, when the main aim of both the Palestinians and of their supporters outside seemed to be simply to provide the resources to allow them to remain in place—to survive, not to be forced out—in the teeth of the policies being pursued by an increasingly aggressive Israeli overlord. But it was not long before many Palestinians became aware of the divisions, the fragmentation and the powerlessness which the dependence on outside largesse was beginning to produce. The result was the emergence of a more dynamic version of *sumud* with an emphasis on cooperation, self-help and popular participation as the major weapons in

the struggle to regain control over their lives and their economy.

## *2. The Effects of Occupation*

In 1970, shortly after the beginning of the occupation, there was a labor force of some 175,000 persons in the West Bank and Gaza. About 60,000 were engaged in agriculture and a similar number in services, with only 20,000 in industry and the remainder working inside the Israeli economy.<sup>1</sup> A decade later, by the early 1980s, the labor force had increased to about 200,000, mostly as a result of an expansion in the number of women in regular employment. Of these, up to 75,000 now worked inside Israel. For the rest, there was a small growth in those employed in the industrial and service sectors but a large decrease in those in agriculture, where numbers fell to some 35,000.

These figures provide just one of the many graphic examples of the effect of occupation and economic colonization. On the one hand, labor was pulled into Israel by its relatively higher wages. On the other, it was squeezed out of agriculture, the most important sector of the economy, by a combination of loss of land to the Israeli settlers and the military, the shortage of credit after Israel closed the banks, and the increasingly difficult problem of water, particularly in the Jordan Valley where the Israelis had prohibited the digging of new wells. In spite of all this, however, there was a steady increase in income and output through most of the decade, due to the introduction of new crops like tomatoes and eggplant, grown with new methods like drip-irrigation, many of which found markets across the Jordan River until the late 1970s, when Jordan and other Arab states began to impose severe restrictions to further the interests of their own agricultural producers.

Palestinian industry experienced many similar problems as a result of Israeli competition (often with products which paid much less tax), lack of credit, and problems with Arab markets where officials were often overzealous in keeping out Palestinian products on the grounds that they might actually have been made in Israel. In these difficult circumstances, the only major growth area was that of sub-contracting to Israeli industry, an activity mainly involving textiles and the employment of women at low rates of pay. By the same token, there was also an increase in the number of people making their living by acting as middlemen between the two economies.

As previously stated, the economies of the West Bank and Gaza faced a serious crisis at the end of the 1970s. This was partly the result of difficulties in maintaining access to Jordanian and Arab markets, and partly of scanty winter rains and a general shortage of water. It was made worse by the intensification of Israeli settlement activity following the Camp David Agreement and by the fact that individual Israelis were permitted to purchase West Bank land in 1979. Added to this were fierce new restrictions on Palestinian economic activity. For example, the decrees of 1983-84 made it necessary to obtain specific permission to produce a number of agricultural and industrial items which might interfere with Israel's ability to sell its own goods in the West Bank and Gaza, territories which had now become its second most valuable export market after the United States. All this was summed up in the chilling statement of Israel's Minister of Defense, General Yitzhak Rabin, who asserted soon after his appointment in 1984: "There will be no development initiated by the Israeli government, and no permits will be given for expanding industry and agriculture which may compete with the state of Israel."<sup>2</sup>

For all these reasons, economic growth slowed to a rate of some one percent a year in the early 1980s. The only way many families survived was through remittances sent home by the 150,000 or so Palestinian workers in Jordan and the Gulf states or by subsidies from the joint Palestinian/Jordanian committee mentioned earlier. According to one source, over a third of the income of the West Bank and Gaza was then coming directly in aid and remittances from outside.<sup>3</sup> The result was a state of dependency, fragmentation and passivity which, as already noted, stimulated some Palestinians to try to re-empower themselves and their people by forming new kinds of community-based organizations aimed at promoting self-reliance and self-help.

### *3. The Popular Committees: From Self-Help to Resistance*

The first popular committees to be formed in the early 1980s seem to have been the Medical Relief Committees. Their origin lay in the activities of a group of Palestinian doctors from Jerusalem Hospital who began to use their day off to go out to the West Bank villages to establish regular clinics. They then constituted themselves as a committee and were soon joined by others so that, by 1983, every section of the West Bank and Gaza was covered by one of eight such organizations. Together, they formed the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees. Their example led to the formation of many other types of committees, such as those established by womens' groups or by agricultural engineers, who provided technical advice to villagers, conducted experiments and then established a shop and an office in Nablus to provide cheap credit, seeds and cuttings for new trees.

There was also a serious effort to give the committee movement national Palestinian guidance, even though this

was made very difficult by the fact that the Israeli authorities were always quick to prevent the establishment of anything which might provide the West Bank with a coherent, central leadership. The first fruit of this new initiative was the conference, "Development in the Service of Steadfastness," which was held in late 1981.<sup>4</sup> Here an attempt was made to establish general, rational, guidelines for the future:

*Sumud* in the face of Israeli colonial occupation . . . requires a revision of previous methods in order to stop the ongoing deterioration engendered by the (Israeli) authorities. It also requires the provision of an acceptable standard of living for the Palestinians in order to support their ability to challenge the occupation within a clear strategic outlook. This could be done by utilizing development as one of the effective means of achieving this purpose and by discouraging political relaxation under any pressure to guide *sumud* in the wrong direction.<sup>5</sup>

Other principles involved the need to be active rather than passive, the need to challenge the occupation and the need to exercise great care when accepting outside aid, whether from the Jordanians, the Arabs or the Americans. Particular suspicion was directed against the whole American/Israeli notion of the need to improve what was now being referred to as the "quality of life," a strategy seen by many Palestinians as a way of diverting the political struggle against the occupation into more peaceful channels. Equal importance was attached to the need to encourage democratic practices wherever possible. This was recognized as the only way to stimulate popular participation and to challenge the pervasive structures of paternalism which, according to Raja Shehadeh in his book *The Third Way*, made Palestinian society so passive and easy to control that it

barely mattered which external authority was giving the orders.<sup>6</sup>

This way of thinking was reinforced by the growing realization that the Israelis were particularly vulnerable to a Palestinian complaint that Israel had done very little to assist the economic growth of the occupied territories, especially since their development could be presented as a basic human right of their Palestinian inhabitants.

For all the new-found enthusiasm for this dynamic version of steadfastness, it would be wrong to exaggerate its impact. In the highly politicized atmosphere of the West Bank it was inevitable that rival committees should be established by rival factions and that the scramble for foreign funds should continue without fail. Moreover, existing power relationships based on class and political connection were hardly likely to disappear overnight. For example, poor farmers continued to be exploited by their merchant creditors in the Jordan Valley, just as has occurred in agricultural sectors elsewhere experiencing a type of "Green Revolution."

The attempt to develop an institutional base for the policies of independence and self-sufficiency did, nevertheless, produce significant progress in two important directions. First, the new Palestinian activism opened up fresh possibilities for outside help. For example, the British aid organization Oxfam has based almost its entire program since the mid-1980s on support for the new popular committees. Even more important was the opportunity that was presented to the European Commission in Brussels to work directly with Palestinian partners, thus avoiding embroilment in the Development Plan by which the Jordanian government was seeking to maintain its political

control over West Bank institutions. It was Community pressure which finally forced the Israelis to agree to allow the export of some West Bank industrial and agricultural produce directly to Europe, where it could benefit from a set of preferential tariffs. And it was also the Community which began to support the notion of "autonomous development" through the provision of financial aid for such organizations as the Arab Development Society at Jericho, described in an internal European Community document as "an important center for Palestinian initiative and steadfastness."

The second source of progress was the emergence of the new committees as a model and an inspiration for many of the institutional initiatives which underpinned and supported the uprising once it had burst out in December 1987. Here was an obvious example of local initiatives being used to mobilize people all over the West Bank and Gaza with only a minimum of central direction. Here too was a fund of experience about the technical problems involved in taking control, or trying to increase control, over basic services like health and education. Once the uprising itself had added its own sense of immediacy and its own sense of solidarity, thus allowing the creation of new committees on which all the main political groups had to learn to work together, it was possible to discern the exciting historical process, first hinted at in Shehadeh's book, of a people under occupation drawing together as a nation, acutely conscious of its situation and of the possibilities which it provided.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. *Epilogue* (August 1988)

It is now five months since the Zafer Al-Masri Symposium. The uprising continues, and many of its economic

implications have become more clear. The first is the nature of the challenge it poses to Israel's attempt to colonize the occupied territories for its own profit. According to Yossi Sared, a member of the Knesset, in the year before the uprising Israel collected some \$188 million in taxes from the West Bank and Gaza while spending only \$85 million.<sup>8</sup> In addition, it also benefitted greatly from the territories as a market for its products (worth perhaps \$780 million in 1986), and as a source of labor.<sup>9</sup> Now, to the best of their ability, the Palestinians are trying to whittle these advantages away, while at the same time raising the cost of occupation both in terms of increased spending on the military and the police, and of revenues foregone, such as those caused by labor shortages and a reduction in the number of tourists. The American Embassy in Tel Aviv estimates that the uprising is now costing Israel \$120 million a month in extra spending on the security services and another \$38 million in lost profits from tourism and sales to West Bank residents.<sup>10</sup>

Although this is not enough to make a significant difference to Israel's national income, it is clearly an important weapon in the on-going struggle between the Palestinians and their Israeli opponents and helps to justify the very real hardships which Palestinians of all classes have suffered. Meanwhile, the Israelis have introduced their own version of economic warfare in trying to contain the uprising by such measures as costly bans on the sale of certain agricultural products or severe cuts in health and welfare payments. All this, coupled with the barriers placed by Israel on the import of outside funds, has meant that the Gross National Product of the occupied territories has decreased by 25 percent in the half year from December 1987 to June 1988, according to Meron Benvenisti of the West Bank Data Project.<sup>11</sup>

Another economic feature of the uprising has been the mushrooming of all kinds of popular committees to reduce dependency on the Israelis by providing alternative services involving banking, food, education, and mail. Some of the most important are the village committees, which include representatives of the main political groups, the agricultural committees which try to organize communal farming in order to build up food reserves in case of an Israeli siege, the merchant committees which oversee the repeated strikes by urban shopkeepers, and the educational committees which were set up to provide classes during the prolonged closure of the schools. All such committees serve as an essential means of mobilization and cooperation on a local basis without having to wait for orders or direction from outside. As a result, they and their members have become a particular focus for Israeli harassment, with many of their most active members being arrested or put into emergency detention.

After King Hussein's decision to sever all of Jordan's links to the West Bank, the Palestinians and their committees face their most severe economic challenge yet. Funds to pay those who have suffered from injury or loss of employment as a result of the uprising will be in even shorter supply. Hardship will inevitably increase. However, there is no doubt that the challenge will be accepted and that the Palestinians themselves will continue to pursue their twin tasks of ensuring their own economic survival while, at the same time, creating the institutions they will need if they are to have a flourishing, free and independent economy in the future.

## NOTES

1. For sources of information on the economies of the West Bank and Gaza I have used the following: Fawzi A. Gharaibeh, *The Economies of the*

West Bank and the Gaza Strip (Boulder: Westview, 1985); the report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "The Palestinian Financial Sector under Israeli Occupation," UNCTAD/ST/SEU/3 (Geneva, July 8, 1987); and George T. Abed, *The Palestinian Economy: Studies in Development under Prolonged Occupation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).

2. Quoted in "The Palestinian Financial Sector under Israeli Occupation," above, p. 25.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

4. This conference is described by Ibrahim Dakkak in "Development from Within: A Strategy for Survival," *ibid.*, pp. 293-294.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

6. Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank* (London: Quartet, 1982), p. 29.

7. This point is made by Glen Bowman in "Tales of the Lost Land: Palestinian Identity and the Formation of a Nationalist Consciousness," *New Formations*, 4 (Spring 1988).

8. Salim Tamari, "What the Uprising Means," *Middle East Report*, 152 (May-June 1988), p. 25.

9. Quoted in *CAABU Bulletin*, 3/18 (October 1, 1987). This is a publication of the London-based Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, 21 Collingham Road, London SW5.

10. Glenn Frankel, "Israel's Economic Warfare against the Palestinians," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (July 31, 1988).

11. *Ibid.*

# RETAINING THE WEST BANK POPULATION



Michael Adams



**F**or someone unfamiliar with the complexities of the Middle East and of the Palestine problem, the subject of my paper must seem a puzzling one. Why should there be any question of “retaining” the population of the West Bank? And what alternative could there be to doing so?

It is very well known that the Palestinians who live in the West Bank are in a precarious situation. Like someone with a serious physical handicap, they can only keep going by exercising a degree of courage and resilience that is not required of the rest of us. Like us, they have to make a living and support their families and educate their children. Unlike us, they can only achieve these quite ordinary ambitions by overcoming a series of disabilities which have been imposed on them and which affect every material and psychological aspect of their lives. Just as a person who is physically handicapped, however courageous he may be, needs a certain amount of help from other people, so too is outside help necessary for these Palestinians if they are to survive in the West Bank and in Gaza—for everything I have to say applies at least as much to Gaza as to the West Bank.

The ability of these Palestinians to survive and to stand their ground against the forces that threaten to overwhelm them depends to a very important extent on the government of the United States, and so, in the last resort, on the American people. And here I want to say two things. The first is that if I am critical of American attitudes and American policies toward the Palestinian problem, I never for a moment forget that the problem itself and the terrible

plight of the Palestinian people today have their origins in the mistakes of British policy-makers in the past. Indeed, it is that knowledge that motivates me as an Englishman to try now to repair some of the damage done by my countrymen. I hope that this acknowledgment may clear me of the charge of hypocrisy when I criticize others for their actions or omissions.

The second thing I have to say in parentheses is this: as a young man I had the opportunity to spend a year in this country and to travel from one end of it to the other exploring the attitudes of a very wide variety of Americans toward the world outside. The experience left me with all sorts of often conflicting impressions. Two remained uppermost: first, of a society that felt itself capable of solving any problem, and second, of a society and a people that believed in moral principles as the basis for action. A lot has happened since then, and perhaps Americans are less sanguine today about their ability to solve each and every problem that comes their way. But I like to think that, whatever American governments may do, the American people retain their respect for moral principles, and that this means that they still want, as they always did, to find not just *a* solution, but the *right* solution to any problem they tackle.

It has not always been easy to go on believing that, especially when it appeared that majority opinion in America supported policies in the Middle East which contradicted every ideal that Americans claim as their own: policies which sanctioned aggression and connived at injustice. But at such times I have taken heart from another distinguishing American characteristic: the ability to recognize a mistake and reverse it. Take the case of the American attitude toward South Africa. Not long ago it would have seemed

unthinkable that the United States Congress and the powerful world of American business should turn against the white supremacists in South Africa and that an American secretary of state serving in the Reagan administration should engage in discussions with the leader of the African National Congress. But all this is happening before our eyes and what has caused it to happen is the growing conviction among ordinary Americans that the whole South African apparatus of discrimination and oppression, the restrictions on the press, the economic exploitation and the wholesale rejection of democratic values—that all of this is wrong, indefensible and, what is more, doomed to failure in the long run.

I say that I find this encouraging even though there is a striking contrast between this new American attitude toward South Africa and the continuing American attitude toward Israel. No careful observer of the international scene needs to be reminded that the very same practices which have turned world opinion so decisively against the government of South Africa are equally characteristic of the Israeli government's treatment of the Palestinians in the occupied territories. The weapons employed are the same: intimidation, using both force and quasi-legal oppression; detention without trial; the arbitrary "transfer" of populations; curfews and police raids; and the denial to one racial group of civil and basic human rights which are enjoyed without question by another. And there is the same underlying principle in South Africa as in Israel: that one section of the community has some sort of divine right to impose its will on the other.

In both countries there are courageous individuals who oppose this principle and who speak out boldly against the denial of democratic freedom. At the height of the distur-

bances in South Africa earlier this year [1987], Mrs. Helen Suzman declared that the whole system of detention without trial, especially applied to children, was a disgrace to a civilized country.

Israel too detains children, as well as adults, without trial; and Israel, like South Africa, claims to be a democratic country. But it has been well said by one of Israel's leading intellectuals, Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, that:

There is no such thing as a half-democracy; either democracy applies to all or it applies to none. Among Jewish Israelis there is freedom of speech, of the press, and of association. . . . However, one and a half million Palestinians are deprived of their civil and political rights. This is a false democracy.<sup>1</sup>

That is the publicly expressed view of a commanding figure in the intellectual establishment of Israel, a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a former editor of the *Encyclopedia Hebraica*. It is a view which is shared by a growing minority of thoughtful Israelis—journalists, university lecturers, even a few politicians—who are deeply worried by the turn of events in Israel and by the denial of democratic values in the Jewish state. How strange it is that such voices should find so little echo here in Washington, in what it is fair to call the engine-room of world democracy—even if, for the moment, there seem to be some contradictory signals coming out of it.

But that is why I say that I feel some encouragement. Americans, when they make mistakes, are not afraid to admit it and to change course, as they have changed (or are changing) course over South Africa. In the same way, I believe that sooner or later an administration in Washington will see the need to change course on the matter of

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Israel and the Palestinians and that one of Mr. Shultz's successors will find himself sitting down with the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In these opening remarks I have tried to suggest why there should be a question mark over the future of the Palestinians and why they need help from outside in order to stay put in their own country. There can be no argument about the pressures being exerted on them today—physical pressures, economic pressures, psychological pressures—which are driving them in the direction of emigration from Palestine. But there has always been a good deal of controversy about the reasons which have impelled them to leave Palestine in the past 41 years, since November 1947. I don't want for the moment to enter into that controversy but only ask you to look objectively at the facts about the Palestinian dispersion, as a result of which, out of some five million Palestinians alive in the world today, more than 60 percent are living in exile outside Palestine.

There have been five principal stages in the process, which started immediately after the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations of a resolution recommending the partition of Palestine. The first stage, when some 300,000 Palestinians became refugees, began in November 1947 and continued for the ensuing six months before the outbreak of open hostilities in Palestine. The second stage dated from May to December of 1948, when Arabs and Jews were fighting each other for control of Palestine. Another 450,000 Palestinians or so left their homes then, making a total of about three-quarters of a million refugees by the end of 1948. In the third stage, from 1948 to 1967, there was a comparative lull, during which only a few thousand more left. Most of this migration was during 1956, when Israel joined Britain and France

in attacking Egypt and occupied the Gaza Strip for the first time. But then in the fourth stage, during and after the war in June 1967, there was another mass exodus of at least 250,000 refugees. And here I can begin to offer personal testimony, because when I entered Palestine by way of the Allenby Bridge in January 1968, a full six months after the end of hostilities, I found that refugees were still fleeing across the Jordan River into the East Bank of Jordan at the rate of between 100 and 200 a day. By then, in the fifth stage, the Israelis had instituted the policy of deporting individual Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza, which has continued intermittently until today. The latest figure I have shows the total number of Palestinians deported in this way to be approximately 1,200.<sup>2</sup>

There has thus been a very marked one-way traffic of Palestinians over the whole 40 years of Israel's existence. If there were no evidence about the causes of this massive migration, I think it would be fair to assume that there was some malign force behind it. People, after all, especially if they have the close ties to the land of most Palestinians, do not easily or willingly abandon their homes, their farms, orchards and businesses, and go abroad to seek shelter in the squalor of a refugee camp. But in the case of the Palestinians there is an abundance of evidence to show that the great majority of them were driven out of their homeland as part of an overall strategy on the part of the Israelis to acquire "the dowry without the bride"—in other words, to gain control of the land of Palestine as far as possible without the Palestinians.

The evidence is there for anyone who cares to examine it. It has been provided by observers of the United Nations and by relief organizations, by the Red Cross, by the International Commission of Jurists, by journalists and authors—

and of course by the Palestinians themselves to anyone who would listen to them. For many years successive Israeli governments sought to obscure the facts and tried to denigrate those who revealed them with accusations of anti-Semitism. Regrettably, they have had a good deal of success, especially with public opinion in North America, which was either very gullible or else very much intimidated by these empty accusations. But lately, Israeli protestations of innocence have been weakened and undermined by the fact that the Israelis themselves—not the government, but individual Israeli scholars and historians—have taken the lead in documenting the processes by which their own governments have to such a large extent been successful in ridding Palestine of the Palestinians. Their research and the conclusions they derive from it are of crucial importance today, when the remaining Palestinians have good reason to believe that a substantial section of Israeli society is eager to get rid of them, too.

There have always been two strands to Zionism. In the 1920s and 1930s, when the Jewish state was only a dream whose outlines were gradually taking shape, there were those like Martin Buber and Judah Magnes who saw the future in terms of conciliation, of some form of peaceful coexistence between the Jewish immigrants and the already present and indigenous Palestinians. They were the idealists, and against them were lined up what one might call the strong-arm faction, of which Ben Gurion became the leader. He was joined later by Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin (minister of defense under the coalition government, with ultimate responsibility for affairs in the occupied territories), and by Golda Meir (under whose leadership the strong-arm faction made some of its most significant gains). They were eventually outpaced by Menachem Begin

and Ariel Sharon and the present prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir.

With a movement like this, facing the obstacles which the Zionists had to overcome if they were to achieve their objective, it was probably inevitable that the men of violence should get the upper hand. Certainly that is what happened. Having gotten the upper hand, they have retained it ever since, with consequences which have been disastrous for the Palestinians and which, I believe, may prove in the end to be disastrous for the Israelis themselves as well.

Despite the ascendancy of the militant Zionists, the advocates of peaceful coexistence have never given up, although they lost the initiative inside the Zionist movement back in the 1930s and were finally outmaneuvered in the late 1940s. Judah Magnes died in 1948 and Martin Buber in 1965, but neither of them gave up hope of reaching an accommodation with the Arabs. Their work was carried on by men like Professor Leibowitz, whom I quoted earlier, and Simha Flapan, whose scholarly book, *Zionism and the Palestinians*,<sup>3</sup> followed the relationship up to 1948 and whose new book on the first Arab-Israeli war continues the story.<sup>4</sup> Younger men joined them, most often *sabras* born in Palestine, including prominent writers and journalists like Boaz Evron and Amnon Kapeliouk.<sup>5</sup> Some of them had started out in the ranks of violent groups, like Uri Avnery, the former member of the Irgun, who for more than 30 years has worked for coexistence between Jew and Arab, and who made history in 1982 by becoming the first Israeli to meet Yasir Arafat.<sup>6</sup>

At first sight their efforts seem to have had little effect, especially on the political leadership in Israel, but the part

they play is a vital one all the same, because they are witnesses to the truth. And it is very important to discover and establish the truth about what has happened in Palestine—all the more so because it has been so distorted and sometimes suppressed by what I shall call the Israeli establishment. By this term, I refer to the politicians and the publicists who—with very powerful support from abroad and particularly from the United States—present to the world the picture of Israel which they want the world to receive and accept. That picture of a brave little democratic island beset by irrational enemies has always been deeply flawed, but the flaws have been so ingeniously and persistently disguised (with the help of those allies abroad to whom I have referred) that the picture itself has been kept pretty well intact for 41 years. That is why so many people would be honestly puzzled to know why I should be discussing how to help the Palestinians of the West Bank stay where they are. They would be puzzled, those honest and well-intentioned people, because they are unaware that throughout those 41 years there has been a constant, unrelenting and largely successful attempt by whatever party was in power in Israel to uproot the Palestinians and “persuade” them to go and live somewhere else (and the means of persuasion have generally been violent ones).

The Israeli establishment would deny this, and has always denied it when it was asserted by outsiders, even when those outsiders were well placed to judge the truth of it, since they had witnessed the process themselves in their capacity as United Nations observers, diplomats or officials working for relief agencies in Palestine. But denial is becoming increasingly difficult in light of research conducted by young Israeli scholars like Tom Segev, whose book *The First Israelis* was published in 1986,<sup>7</sup> and Benny Morris, who, in an article in the journal *Middle Eastern*

*Studies* in January 1986, used previously secret Israeli documents to establish that there was no foundation for the long-standing Israeli claim that the refugees had left Palestine in 1948 on the instructions of the Arab governments.<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, Dr. Morris established that more than 70 percent of the refugees had been driven out by the Zionist military and paramilitary forces fighting for the creation of the state of Israel.

And this brings me, by what you may think has been a very roundabout route, to the nub of what I have to say. The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza feel today that there is a real danger that the Israelis will try to expel them—indeed, that the attempt is already being made through such means as economic pressure, psychological intimidation and simple force. As evidence of this, Palestinians quote the published statements of Israelis of the right-wing parties, including members of the present government. There is further evidence in the results of public opinion polls, like one carried out in October 1986, in which more than a third of the Israelis questioned said they were in favor of unspecified action “to make the Arabs leave Judea and Samaria,” *i.e.*, the West Bank. But surely the most persuasive evidence is the fact that whenever they have seen an opportunity in the past, the Israeli authorities of whatever party was in power have always taken such action, and generally very violent action, to remove as many Palestinians as possible from whatever territory had been most recently occupied.

The fear of expulsion is at the very least well justified. The question is: what can be done, what can *we* do, to prevent it and to ensure that those Palestinians who still remain in Palestine can withstand the pressures on them to throw in the towel and leave?

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As I suggested earlier, the answer depends ultimately on the government of the United States. Only resolute pressure from Washington, the kind of pressure exerted by President Eisenhower after the Suez invasion in 1956, could deter the Israelis from a course of action on which they were decided. Since we cannot expect such pressure in the foreseeable future, we have to consider other means. The first essential, I suggest, is to promote a determined effort to discover *and to publish* the facts about the Palestine question. Thanks in part to the efforts of those Israeli researchers, most of the facts are now available to specialists in this field, but it is evident that in the United States at large they are still shrouded in mystery and ambiguity.

I mentioned earlier my conviction that the American people, given the facts about a situation, would want to come up with the right solution. But a solution which involves the subjugation or expulsion of the entire people of Palestine cannot be the right solution to the Palestine problem. Yet that is the logical conclusion of the present American policy of giving massive and unqualified support to governments in Israel which refuse to compromise in any respect with the legitimate rights of the Palestinians. If the American people could be made aware of this, I cannot believe that they would continue to support the policies of the present administration. Again, the South African example is relevant.

But how can the facts about Palestine be brought to the attention of the American public? Clearly there is a lack of communication somewhere along the line. Can it be that there is also a deliberate attempt to withhold or suppress relevant information? An instinctive reaction would be that this surely could not happen in the United States of America, yet there is a curious circumstance which calls for an

explanation. Of the many books which have been published in recent years about the Palestine question, there are three which provide an exceptionally comprehensive and well-documented account of the whole sorry story. One is *The Gun and the Olive Branch* by David Hirst, the most experienced British correspondent in the Middle East.<sup>9</sup> The second is *The Fateful Triangle* by Noam Chomsky.<sup>10</sup> The third and most recent is *The Palestine Problem in International Law and World Order* by Thomas Mallison, director of the international and comparative law program at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C., and Sally Mallison, research associate in the same program.<sup>11</sup> When David Hirst's book was published it was sent for review to *The New York Times*, which commissioned and received a long review, which a friend of mine read in proof. But the review was never published. Noam Chomsky's book, when I last inquired, some three years after its publication, had not been reviewed in any leading newspaper or publication in the United States. And the same is true of the Mallison book, which was published in England, not the United States, nearly two years ago.

Whatever the explanation may be for the neglect of such books by reviewers in the United States, I think that one thing is clear. As long as it is possible in this country to restrict the public's access to the essential facts about a situation, my rule of thumb about the American people wanting to come to the right conclusions cannot operate. That is a problem that only Americans themselves can do anything to solve.

The second essential is to reinforce the efforts of those Israelis who oppose a policy which is cruel in itself and whose consequences can only be to cause yet more misery and bloodshed. This again is primarily a task for govern-

ments. It is also, however, a task to which institutions, especially academic institutions, and individuals, journalists and writers can address themselves. To do so and to encourage moderation would be to everyone's advantage in the Middle East. Not the least beneficiary would be Israel, which sees itself as the victim of political extremism and which pursues policies that do so much to provoke it. And yet it is a curious fact that Israel's friends, among whom every American administration insists on being numbered, have consistently lent their support to the extremists in Israel and have ignored the moderates. The result has been to encourage the extremists to adopt positions yet more extreme and to drive even further out of reach the kind of compromise which alone offers any prospect of a peaceful settlement. Little knowledge of history is needed to see how dangerous this must be, for Israel as much as for its opponents.

One need is, therefore, to strengthen the hand of the moderates in Israel, which would also encourage the moderates in the Arab world, who have almost completely lost faith in the U.S. Another is to ensure that the truth about Palestine is made available to anyone who wants to know it. The remaining essential need is to provide the beleaguered Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza with material help to withstand the pressures to which they are subject and which may at any moment be too much for them. This is, on the face of it, a more straightforward task and one which should not present much difficulty. There are various means by which aid from the outside world in the form of money and equipment can be channeled to the people in the West Bank, and there are many organizations, official and unofficial, which are engaged in this undertaking. Many of them are American groups whose operations I have witnessed myself and for whose techni-

cal expertise and dedication I have great admiration. But they have to contend with problems which severely limit the scope and effectiveness of the aid they provide.

You can see this quite clearly from the fact that, despite their efforts, the economy of the West Bank is in a state of deep depression and there is very little activity which could be described as economic development at all. Nor are the reasons for this hard to discover. The Israeli authorities insist on their right to control the activities of these externally-financed development agencies, as part of the very strict pattern of control which they exercise over every aspect of the lives of the people in the occupied territories. Most of the foreign agencies—in particular those using funds provided by the U.S. government—concede this right and limit their operations to those areas which the Israelis approve. And since the Israeli authorities are anxious not to allow any serious economic development to take place in the West Bank, they approve only minor schemes. Permission is refused for any important project which would provide large-scale employment for Palestinians, build up their resources as a community, and thus strengthen their resolve and their capacity to resist the pressure to emigrate.

The subject is a complex one and I cannot go into detail here, but the facts about it have been carefully documented by Meron Benvenisti in his West Bank and Gaza data base study, using official Israeli statistics.<sup>12</sup> What I would emphasize is this. First, as long as the Israelis are in a position to control any funds allocated for development in the West Bank and Gaza, and clearly wish to limit such development and to increase the pressures on the Palestinian population, the eventual result is inevitable: more Palestinians will find themselves forced into exile until there remain only as many Palestinians as the Israeli economy

can absorb as laborers in Israeli enterprises. The West Bank and Gaza, in short, will be reduced to the status of a reservoir of unskilled labor. The Palestinians residing there, deprived of all civil and political rights, with their natural leaders in exile, will be merely the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Israeli settlers who are steadily taking over their lands.

There are those, it seems, who see nothing wrong in such a conclusion to the Palestine story. But the rest of us would see it not merely as a shameful betrayal but as a recipe for disaster, because it would project today's misery and hatred into an endless future. For us, there must be something better to strive for: something closer to the natural justice which we would all like to see, but which does not come about unprompted and of itself. What the Palestinians deserve from us in the West, who have not been innocent of complicity in their fate, is, in the first place, that we should do everything possible to see that more material assistance is provided for them, both through government agencies and through private and voluntary organizations. That is the easy part.

What we must also do (and it will be more difficult, but it is also even more urgently necessary) is to change public attitudes, especially here in the United States, toward both Israel and the Palestinians. Using every instrument of publicity that is open to us, and disregarding every attempt that will be made by propaganda and personal abuse to dissuade us, we must insist that those who represent us in government and at the United Nations should cease to compromise with evil in Palestine and should exercise the influence they undoubtedly have to restore some semblance of right and justice there. The great English historian Arnold Toynbee once wrote:

Right and wrong are the same in Palestine as anywhere else. What is peculiar about the Palestine conflict is that the world has listened to the party that committed the offense and has turned a deaf ear to the victims.<sup>13</sup>

That is what we have to change, and it won't be easy.

## NOTES

1. Interview in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Winter 1986), p. 107.

2. According to *Punishing a Nation*, published in December 1988 by Al-Haq (Law in the Service of Man, the Palestine-based affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva), 1156 people were deported between 1967 and 1977; half a dozen more between 1977 and 1985; 42 between 1985 and 1987; and 51 since the beginning of the *intifadah* in December 1987.

3. Published by Croom Helm, London, in 1979.

4. *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987).

5. See, for example, Amnon Kapeliouk, *Israel: La Fin des Mythes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1975).

6. See Avnery's *My Friend the Enemy* (London: Zed Press, 1986).

7. Tom Segev, 1949, *The First Israelis* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

8. Benny Morris, "The Causes and Character of the Arab Exodus from Palestine: The Israel Defence Forces Intelligence Branch Analysis of June 1948," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (January 1986), pp. 5-19.

9. Published by Faber and Faber, London, 1979, and Futura, London, 1978 and 1983.

10. Published by Pluto Press, London, 1983.

11. Published by Longman, London, 1986.

12. See Meron Benvenisti, *U.S. Government Funded Projects in the West Bank and Gaza (1977-1983)*, published by the West Bank Data Base Project (P.O. Box 14319, Jerusalem, 1984).

13. "Foreword" in *The Transformation of Palestine*, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.), (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. viii.

# THE CHALLENGE TO ISRAEL



Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh



It is both a fitting tribute and a timely challenge that this symposium, "Palestinians under Occupation: Prospects for the Future," has been convened to commemorate the late mayor of Nablus, Zafer al-Masri, whose life and death epitomize the tragic fate of the Palestinian people. Today, more than half of the Palestinian community live outside the borders of their homeland, having endured as many as 40 years of exile and dispersal. The remainder are subject to a still interminable occupation within their own homeland.

Unlike most Palestinians, Zafer al-Masri had the option of leaving the occupied territories for a comfortable life outside Palestine, and was often advised by friends to do so to pursue his family's extensive business interests abroad. Yet he adamantly refused, citing his duty to serve his people in their time of collective suffering. His mother told me later of her aversion to the word *mu'anah*—suffering—because it was on his lips every day, when he spoke of the deprivation and hardships experienced by his fellow Palestinians.

When Zafer al-Masri reluctantly agreed to become mayor of Nablus in deference to popular demand, he did so with dreams of a speedy rejuvenation of the city. The Israeli military authorities who had seized control of its government from 1982 until December 1985 had kept it in a state of immobility and stagnation. Zafer hoped to reintroduce some degree of normalcy to the lives of ordinary people and so immediately issued a large number of building licenses, the applications for which had gathered dust on

the shelves where they had been deposited by indifferent military officials. He paid municipal employees their salaries from his own pocket when their funds had been frozen for months at a time in Amman.

As we know, Zafer's service was soon cut tragically short. I was in my office at the Prime Ministry in Amman on March 2, 1986, when a telephone rang. I was told that there was ominous news: Zafer had been shot by an unknown assailant, though the extent of his injuries was unknown. For half an hour, we were in touch with people in different countries, hoping that the rumors would prove to be untrue. Finally, a call from Paris confirmed our worst fears. Zafer had been assassinated.

The feeling of the people of the occupied territories for Zafer and his spirit of service was expressed eloquently at his funeral. One hundred thousand citizens and more thronged to Nablus from all over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and from the Palestinian community of Israel to pay their respects.

Our profound sense of shock and anguish was made all the worse because Zafer had never been one to engage in controversies or petty local political feuds; there was no sense of personal animosity directed against him. He was wholly dedicated to the service of his people in a quiet, unassuming way and sought neither commendation nor reward. And yet he died of an assassin's bullet from one of his own.

While his personal life and familial means provided a shield of material comfort, it did not and could not block out the basic inequality of the status quo, in which the Palestinians had found themselves pitted against an oppressive, militaristic power which had commandeered their lives

as much as it had their land. The Palestinian dispersal after the 1948 and 1967 wars took place on such a massive scale that virtually no family remained intact, even though prior to the exodus the Palestinian people had been a cohesive, homogeneous and integrated society. By contrast, Palestinians now live scattered in almost every corner of the world, by necessity, not by choice.

Close to half a million Palestinian refugees are in war-torn Lebanon, at the receiving end of turmoil, factionalism, invasion, devastation, massacre and hunger. Not far to their south, cut off by a heavily fortified border, are over 600,000 of their kinsmen, and often relatives, living as Israeli citizens. There are about 750,000 Palestinians in the strategic Gulf region and Saudi Arabia, most of them carrying Jordanian passports. A few hundred thousand Palestinian refugees reside in Syria, with almost an equal number in Egypt, Iraq, the United States, Canada, Latin America and western Europe. Approximately one and a half million live in the East Bank of Jordan. In the occupied territories, where Zafer lived, there are about one and a half million residents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip combined.

This bird's eye-view of Palestinian demography and geography should go a long way toward explaining the differing situations from which the dispersed Palestinian people view their problem and its solution. This symposium focuses upon one major dimension of their problem: the prospects for the future of those Palestinians who live under occupation.

This question of the occupied territories will determine the future of Israel's relations with the Arab world. The Camp David framework was fundamentally flawed

because it failed to resolve the ultimate fate of the inhabitants of the territories, or the future of the Palestinian people as a whole, whether under occupation or outside their homeland. Its provision for autonomy for the inhabitants of the territories was interpreted by the Israeli government as meaning some kind of arrangement that would grant autonomy to the inhabitants, but leave them with no control over the land. Of course, a territory cannot be separated from its people, any more than a farmer can be separated from his land. As Mr. Peres said in 1979: "Realistically, I cannot see how you can separate self-government from a territory."

The issue at stake is whether the territories will be annexed or restored to their inhabitants. A continuation of the occupation means the eventual annexation of the territories. This annexation would have major demographic ramifications. Because of the size and growth rate of the population of the occupied territories, the people clearly will not be accorded democratic rights by Israel. Yet if the occupation continues, the alternatives to a bi-national state would be either the creation of a new South Africa in the Middle East or an inconceivable act of genocide.

Israel sometimes advances an argument, based upon its view of security, for the annexation of the occupied territories. Yet this is clearly no longer the uppermost concern in its calculations. Israel has benefitted greatly from the divisions in the Arab and Islamic worlds, from Egypt's withdrawal from the ranks of the confrontation states, from the devastating Iraq-Iran war, and from the Lebanese carnage. Its full-fledged strategic alliance with the United States has tilted the military balance enormously in Israel's favor and enabled it to double its military capacity of the October War, when it had to fight on two fronts. Military

considerations, now or in the near future, are therefore not a compelling factor influencing Israel's judgment on the solution to the Palestinian question.

In the absence of a situation threatening world peace and security, the kind of international diplomatic pressure that could move negotiations forward is at a very low ebb, and diplomacy has been confined to pleadings and pious declarations for peace. Movement toward peace is, however, possible. The P.L.O., Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt could negotiate with Israel under the aegis of an international conference comprising the five permanent members of the Security Council. Remember that Israel was born in the womb of the United Nations. It would be highly appropriate for the Palestinian state that should have come to life simultaneously with Israel four decades ago to now see the dawn of life in a similar international framework.

I do not believe that such a conference would turn into an acrimonious debate, as Israel contends. As I see it, if the political will exists, the parties directly involved will be doing all the arduous and detailed negotiations in quiet, businesslike working groups, with the major powers acting as referees in cases of impasse. The broad outlines of an acceptable peace on the basis of Resolution 242 are already clearcut in many people's minds. Since the peace will include a solution to the major problems, there need be no fear about the establishment of divided, fortified frontiers. Jerusalem will not be a divided city, but rather an open one, as it was during the British Mandate and at earlier periods of history. Sovereignty will be exercised by each side over its own sector.

To integrate the Palestinian territories, a geographic linkage must be made between the Gaza Strip, the West

Bank and Jordan, which would provide a much-needed outlet to the Mediterranean for the reconstituted state. As with the European Community or the United States, barriers will have to be removed to permit the flow of people and commerce unhindered. If a just and acceptable peace is reached, it would become inconceivable for either party's guns to be directed at the other, just as it is inconceivable today for German guns to be directed at France or vice-versa, despite the history of warfare between the two countries. Genuine peace has its own momentum, and generates a new set of attitudes, norms and values.

The key question is whether or not Israel is willing to barter peace for territories. This is an issue that has been unresolved for years. In 1973, I had a conversation with Dr. Gunnar Jarring, who had been the United Nations mediator in the Middle East in the years following the 1967 war, and who eventually gave up his efforts, totally disillusioned. He recalled his frustrating attempts at mediation, describing his mission as a dialogue of the deaf, which became an exercise in futility because the political will was wanting on the Israeli side, as it is today. At that time, the P.L.O. was not even involved in the effort, so the negative attitude of Israel cannot be ascribed to a refusal to deal with the P.L.O. on the grounds that it sought the destruction of Israel.

Recently, I was rereading a statement that I had made to the United Nations General Assembly during its debate on the question of Palestine in 1976. The statement seems so identical with my views today that it is distressing that more than a decade has been allowed to lapse with no movement whatsoever toward achieving a just and lasting solution to the Palestine problem. Once again, I would like to voice the final words of that statement which are directed to Israel.

## *THE CHALLENGE TO ISRAEL*

Israel is presently at the crossroads, ambivalent and undecided. To its people, I would like to observe: you have two options before you. For the time being, you have possession of real estate—not an unimportant bargaining point. You are arming to the teeth with the latest and most lethal weapons. This has its price, reflected by a deficit in your balance of payments that has reached many billions of dollars and is always on the rise.

Your internal economy and social harmony are threatened by a militaristic orientation and a siege mentality. You have even engaged in the perilous pursuit of atomic stockpiling—a policy which could affect the survival of mankind. But, as the late Professor Arnold Toynbee stated on the basis of his study of history: “For every challenge there is a response. The greater the challenge, the greater will be the response.”

The danger, therefore, is that the pursuit of the option of belligerency, no matter how intoxicating temporarily, can never indefinitely remain a one-way process. Many on both sides believe in the prophetic inevitability of Armageddon in the Holy Land. I used to hear about it, even when I was a child in Jerusalem. But to make things less bleak for both of us, and for the world at large, I would like to cite a verse from the Holy Quran, which reads: “A day in your God’s calendar is the equivalent of one thousand years in your calculations.” So if any of us has a penchant for self-fulfilling prophecies, let us opt for God’s calendar, which would at least give us and the world an extra thousand years of grace and survival.

The true option is a real peace, provided that the inalienable rights of the Palestinians are restored. This does not mean, as you claim, the dismantling of Israel. You have achieved your dream of statehood and the world has been

saying that it will be guaranteed by the Security Council and by the major powers, individually and collectively.

A change toward peace, with the Palestinians and the Arab world at large, requires a change of vision on your part, a deep and unprejudiced reappraisal of where your true interests lie. There are already one and a half million Palestinians in the occupied territories. They are not the monstrous creatures they are depicted to be in some of your media. And enabling the remaining Palestinians who are refugees to exercise their right to return or not to return will not be the unmitigated disaster you imagine it to be, especially if the return is accomplished in phases and in an orderly and organized fashion over the years. They are a hard-working, skilled and peace-loving people who would like to again be on their soil.

If this plan were given serious consideration by your leadership, and if Palestinians and Israelis lived side by side in amity and fraternity as the Arabs and Jews did for countless generations, the Middle East and the world might witness one of its greatest creative transformations. But let me stress that this can only happen if both you and we unshackle ourselves from the conflicts, tragedies and sufferings of the past few decades. Let us think in terms of a new order, within a framework of genuine peace, in which the tractor replaces the tank as a way of life.

These two options are now clearly available to you. The onus of choice is yours. The consequences of your decision will be momentous indeed, not only to us and you, but to the world at large for decades to come.

Alas, if we continue on our present path, people of integrity, intelligence, goodwill and dedication to peace

## *THE CHALLENGE TO ISRAEL*

will continue to pay with their lives, as so many others have for decades. Let us hope and pray that a just and lasting peace will finally be achieved, so that Zafer al-Masri's ultimate sacrifice will not have been in vain.

### NOTE

This is an abridged version of Dr. Nuseibeh's address to the Georgetown symposium. The omitted sections incorporated a discussion of the Jordanian policy of the time on the Palestinian issue, which has since been superseded.



ANATOMY  
OF AN UPRISING

The Palestinian *Intifadah*



Ann Mosely Lesch



The uprising that has engulfed the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the past nine months was sparked by a relatively minor incident.<sup>1</sup> On December 8, 1987 an Israeli military tank transport ploughed into a line of vehicles approaching the entrance to the Gaza Strip. It crushed a van loaded with Palestinian workers, killing four of them instantly. That night the funeral for the men exploded into a mass demonstration that spread the following day throughout the Strip and into refugee camps on the West Bank. The *intifadah* (literally translated from the Arabic as “shaking off” but more widely translated as “uprising”) rapidly assumed the proportions of a general popular rejection of the 20-year-old Israeli occupation. It was soon transformed from a spontaneous protest into a complex political movement. Its aims expanded from tactical demands for the amelioration of the conditions of the occupation to a strategic demand for independence in a state alongside Israel.

While the *intifadah* does not represent the first Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule, it is the most sustained, coherent and comprehensive opposition to date. There were at least three prior periods of protest.

The first, in the late 1960s, took place in the wake of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in June 1967. Lawyers and teachers mounted civil disobedience campaigns to protest changes in the legal and educational systems made by Israel. A full-scale insurrection broke out in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli army crushed the rebellion in Gaza, arrested and deported strike leaders on the West

Bank and banned nationalist activities. The Palestinian protests themselves were weakened by uncertainty about Palestinian political objectives. At first, most Palestinians assumed that the occupation would be brief and the territories would return to Jordan and Egypt. Subsequently, the attraction of Palestinian nationalism grew with the expansion of the Palestine Liberation Organization (P.L.O.). But Palestinian political aims were confused and unfocused, and the defeat of the Arab armed forces in 1967 left the Palestinians without significant diplomatic or military support.

In the mid-1970s a second wave of protests swept the West Bank. They followed the October War of 1973, which had reactivated the Arab diplomatic option, and the formation of the Palestine National Front (P.N.F.) in the occupied territories, a structure which, while being linked to the P.L.O., sought a limited two-state solution. Despite the arrest and deportation of key members of the P.N.F., its popularity was signalled by the municipal council elections in 1976, which were swept by nationalist candidates. The successor National Guidance Committee, formed in the wake of the Camp David accords, expressed popular objections to the "autonomy" formula and called for a complete end to Israeli control. Those political moves were accompanied by limited acts of civil disobedience, notably student-led demonstrations, general strikes on key anniversaries and incidents of stone-throwing in the refugee camps. The Israeli government was able to contain the protest by arresting the P.N.F. leaders and banning the National Guidance Committee. Without a second tier of organized leadership to fall back on, protests remained sporadic and fragmented.

The third wave of protests, in the early 1980s, revealed the sense of desperation in the Palestinian community. By

then, the Israeli authorities were replacing the elected municipal councils with Israeli military officers, confiscating massive areas of village land in order to construct Jewish settlements, and imposing additional taxes on the professional community and merchants. Efforts to protest those moves through strikes, legal action and demonstrations proved ineffective. Moreover, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 seemed to seal the fate of the Palestinians living in the occupied territories. Defense Minister Ariel Sharon contended that once the P.L.O.'s power was eliminated in Lebanon, residents of the West Bank and Gaza would have to accept the status quo.

Sharon's prediction appeared to be realistic in the mid-1980s. The mood was grim and the Palestinians were demoralized in the territories; divisions within the P.L.O. were reflected among the residents. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin's Iron Fist policy—announced in August 1985—instituted tough measures against protestors. Administrative detention, house demolition, and deportation were stepped up in order to intimidate the Palestinians into submission.

### *1. Catalyzing Events*

The combined result of the weakening of the Palestinian movement outside the territories and the crackdown by the Israeli government inside was that the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza began to realize the need for more effective organization in order to prevent their destruction as a community. Since political organizations were banned by Israel, their efforts focused instead on grass-roots charitable structures and cultural institutions.

The impetus for a strategy of self-reliance also derived from their observation of the effectiveness of the Shia mili-

tants against Israel in 1983-85. In the aftermath of Israel's invasion of their country, the villagers of south Lebanon had risen up against that alien occupation and compelled Israel to withdraw. For the first time, Israel relinquished territory, not as a result of negotiations but because of guerrilla harassment and loss of political will. Palestinians knew that they could not use violence in the manner of the Lebanese, but they could use popular mobilization as a moral force to shift the political advantage from Israel's side to their own.

During 1987 two key developments crystallized Palestinian views and promoted organized action. The first was the convening of the Palestine National Council (P.N.C.) in April and the second was the Arab summit conference in November. The P.N.C. ended the major cleavages within the P.L.O.; the Popular Front and Democratic Front resumed their seats, and a representative of the Communist Party was added to the executive body. The P.N.C. thus brought together the main organizations under the continuing leadership of Yasir Arafat. This move toward unity occurred despite the strong opposition of Syrian president Hafez al-Asad, who promoted a renegade faction of Fatah under Abu Musa. As a result, the social, cultural and union organizations that different factions had sponsored in the occupied territories began to work together and regained a sense of common purpose. Moreover, for the first time, Islamic-oriented groups joined with the national movement. In particular, the Gaza-based Islamic Jihad began to cooperate with Fatah in the Strip in the summer of 1987. Its members killed an Israeli officer in August and engaged in shoot-outs with Israeli troops in October, sparking demonstrations at the Islamic University. The participation of an Islamic group in the struggle against

Israeli rule added an important new dimension to the conflict and helped electrify the atmosphere.

Next, a hang glider attack from Lebanon on November 25, 1987 heightened tension. One of the Palestinian guerrillas killed six soldiers at an Israeli base before he was overpowered. The sheer audacity of the raid—and the acute embarrassment that it caused for Israel—rekindled the imagination of Palestinians in the territories.

Finally, the summit meeting of Arab states that convened in Amman in mid-November was a turning point for the Palestinians. The summit was held to coordinate Arab responses to the Iran-Iraq war, which had dragged on for seven years and was threatening to engulf the Arab countries. King Hussein of Jordan viewed the war as the number one priority for the Arab world. In addition, he felt that it would be the best vehicle for the reintegration of Egypt into the Arab fold, since Cairo could provide strategic depth on behalf of Iraq. He argued that the Arab regimes should restore relations with Egypt despite its peace treaty with Israel. The summit supported the king's viewpoint, and most governments returned their ambassadors to Cairo shortly afterwards.

Palestinians were shocked by the deliberations at the summit. They saw the Arab rulers sitting just next door in Amman but, with their backs turned away from the West Bank, they faced the Gulf. In effect, the rulers had stated that their energies should focus on the Gulf crisis and that Israel's occupation of Palestinian land was a dead issue, which they could not resolve.

In retrospect, different trends were crystallizing. On the one hand, Israeli programs to absorb the territories

and quell the aspirations of their residents were at a peak. On the other, Palestinians felt they had run into a dead end. The sense of total blockage within the occupied territories was combined with the feeling that no help could be expected from outside. The P.L.O. was too weak, the Arab states had lost interest, and the United States was too committed to Israel to comprehend the Palestinian situation, let alone broker a satisfactory accord. At the very moment when all internal and external forces appeared to block any movement on the Palestinian front, the *intifadah* erupted. Led by youths who were born after the occupation began in 1967 and had lived face-to-face with the Israeli military throughout their lives, the uprising shattered the barrier of fear that had paralyzed their parents.

## 2. *The Intifadah: Organization and Phases*

Demonstrations began in December 1987 in the refugee camps, which had always been a key locus of protest, and spread to the towns and villages. Although Gazan villages had grown to the point that they had merged over the years with the camps and towns, the 500 villages on the West Bank were scattered widely and had not been closely involved in the nationalist protests in the past. This time, however, West Bank villagers were keenly motivated to join the *intifadah* because of the massive seizures of agricultural and grazing land over the past decade which had threatened, disrupted or destroyed their very livelihood.

The participation of villagers in the protests added a crucial new dimension to the problems faced by the Israeli armed forces. Given the large number of villages and their relative inaccessibility, the army could only control about 100 at any one time. Moreover, since incidents would occur in disparate locales, first in one place and then in another

more distant spot, the troops were kept off-guard. By contrast, the refugee camps could be barricaded and ghettoized more easily by the army, and the entire Gaza Strip could be sealed to the outside. Nevertheless, a massive mobilization of Israeli military manpower was required: troop strength was increased ten-fold, from less than 2,000 soldiers on both the West Bank and Gaza Strip before the *intifadah*, to 15-20,000 today.

The organization of the *intifadah* differs significantly from prior periods of protest. This is due in large part to the fact that many of the mayors and intellectuals who led the movement in the past have by now been deported, and their organizations disbanded. Since they had operated publicly, their names and societies were known and they were vulnerable to Israeli counteraction. By contrast, the leaders of the *intifadah* deliberately have sought to remain anonymous and to keep their organizational structure fluid. Proclamations are issued in the name of the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising, but the names of its leaders are unknown. The major groups which were reunited at the P.N.C. in 1987 appear to be included in the unified command, which is apparently youthful and closely attuned to the needs and views of the community.

At the local level, the overall leadership is linked to myriad political committees in neighborhoods in Palestinian refugee camps, villages and towns. Other committees handle health, agricultural, educational and women's issues. In each section of a town, residents have elected a committee to coordinate their resistance efforts and handle emergencies. Residents donate small sums of money so that food can be stockpiled for emergencies. A team checks and cleans old wells and cisterns for use if Israel cuts off the water lines. A census is taken of all the residents so that

each person's skills are known; each is then assigned a role to play in case of emergency. The neighborhood committee also supervises the planting of vegetable gardens and provides aid to the needy.

Health committees play important roles. Doctors go to villages on an organized rotation. Paramedics are trained to treat the wounded. In Gaza, medical groups organized seminars for women and young people in the camps to train them in coping with the effects of tear gas and in providing first aid.

Education was another matter, as the communities found it more difficult to organize alternative schooling. The military government closed the universities in early January and the schools in early February. More than a month elapsed before the residents began to organize alternative schools; fearing that their children would lose several months of instruction, they seized the opportunity to establish their own curriculum. Although "freedom schools" sprang up in several localities, they were risky ventures. The military threatened to arrest anyone participating in them, and when government schools reopened, the alternative instruction system folded. But the idea of creating a Palestinian curriculum remained and a quiet effort to reform the school system has developed among educators.

Communication on organizational and political issues takes place partly by word of mouth, but its main articulation comes from the *bayanat*, the official statements of the Unified Leadership. Those two-page mimeographed sheets appear at night around the West Bank and Gaza at intervals of approximately a week to ten days. In the beginning, the declarations were printed at a central location and distributed by van. But after a carload of *bayanat* was seized in February and a printing press closed down, printing and

distribution were decentralized. Thereafter, one copy of the text would be smuggled from one town to the next to be reproduced and circulated, reducing the risk of detection and arrest.

The *bayanat* set out specific instructions for the coming week or fortnight, detailing the days on which there would be general strikes and demonstrations and the hours at which shops should open and close. They also conveyed requests for certain officials to resign or extended congratulations to particular towns or villages for their resistance efforts. For example, *bayanat* have requested that policemen and appointed mayors resign, have set business shop hours from nine o'clock to noon daily, and have reminded people to boycott Israeli goods when there are Palestinian-made substitutes. *Bayanat* have also urged workers to work inside Israel only in cases of dire necessity and have praised the efforts of Jewish peace forces inside Israel in support of the Palestinian cause.

Residents eagerly await the arrival of the *bayanat* at their doorsteps and follow the instructions carefully. While there have been attempts by the Israeli authorities to print false *bayanat*, Palestinians emphasized to me that they could readily tell the difference. They claimed that there was always something suspicious about the wording of the bogus sheets, such as a demand that was apt to cause dissension among the people. By contrast, the authentic declarations expressed consensus views and were careful not to go beyond the realistic possibilities of mobilizing the public.

Nevertheless, the uprising has encountered difficulties in gauging just how far civil disobedience can go. Many policemen resigned in response to the *bayanat*, but some had to return to work after two or three months because they lacked any other source of income. The movement

had no strike funds with which to assist them. Leaders of the uprising have not been able to request a complete stoppage of work inside Israel for the same reason of financial necessity.

The methods utilized in the *intifadah* have evolved over the course of time. The early period was marked by an emphasis on mass protests, with large numbers of people pouring into the streets to confront Israeli soldiers with stones, burning tires and barricades. Such large-scale demonstrations are difficult to sustain for many months, which explains why, over time, they evolved into cat-and-mouse tactics. A group of youths would set up a makeshift barricade, which would attract a military patrol. The soldiers would shoot at the youngsters, who would hurl stones and then scatter into the alleys. Alternatively, a jeep with soldiers would station itself in the middle of the vegetable market in a refugee camp, flaunting its authority while the residents hurried to shop. After a while, its presence would inflame the situation to the point that boys would start pelting it with stones. The soldiers would leap out, shooting in all directions as they chased the children, beating them with truncheons and shooting volleys of tear gas into the market area. For most of the early period, the youths' aim was to keep the military off-balance, to harass them and try to minimize their own casualties.

In May and June 1988, the organizers added the tactic of burning Israeli property. Large areas of Palestinian orchards had already been uprooted by the army, and the Arabs retaliated in kind by burning pine forests, pastures and fields inside Israel. By late June, the Jewish National Fund reported that 36,000 acres had been destroyed.

By early summer the *intifadah* appeared to lose momentum. Enthusiasm flagged as the deaths and injuries con-

tinued without any political results in sight. Meanwhile, the hot weather turned the refugees' tin-roofed shelters into furnaces, a particularly trying place to be during curfews. Nevertheless, during this period the structure of local committees was put most solidly in place, significantly enhancing the organizational abilities of the *intifadah* leadership.

At this time, Israel inadvertently helped rekindle mass protests with three actions. First, it reopened the schools, which brought together thousands of highly motivated young people for political discussion and action. The resultant swift upsurge in demonstrations caused the government to close schools in late July, a month earlier than planned.

Second, the military authorities alienated the solidly middle class and largely Christian community in the Bethlehem area by rough measures taken against its residents in an attempt to quell the *intifadah* by intimidation. At 4:30 a.m. on July 7, some 500 soldiers entered Beit Sahur—adjacent to Bethlehem—and besieged the homes of 50 leading residents. The Israeli troops seized identity cards and impounded cars, arguing that the residents had withheld income tax, vehicle registration fees and other taxes. The soldiers then ordered the residents to the school, where tax officials would assess the amounts due and collect the revenue. The whole town rose as one in protest. Nearly 500 residents turned in their own identity cards, in solidarity, and not one single resident went to the school to be taxed. The military clamped a 10-day curfew on the town. As soon as it was lifted, the main square filled with demonstrators waving Palestinian flags, church bells pealed and soldiers charged into the crowd. While Beit Sahur was sealed off for another two days, the disturbances quickly

spread to nearby Bethlehem and Beit Jala. By then, some 1,000 residents of the three towns were in jail and the rest were seething with anger.

The third Israeli provocation occurred when its archeological authorities began to excavate a tunnel in the Muslim quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, extending from the edge of al-Haram al-Sharif (the Temple Mount) to the Via Dolorosa. Islamic officials decried the dig as threatening the foundations of the Haram and as a new example of the Jewish effort to gain control over those sacred precincts. Mass demonstrations were held on the Haram and in the cobblestone streets of the Old City. They also extended to the residential neighborhoods outside the walls, where a young man was killed—the first “martyr”<sup>1</sup> in Jerusalem. By the end of July, Jerusalem was transformed into a key center of protest, ignited by the Israeli dig.

### 3. *Objectives*

The goals of the *intifadah* have evolved as time has passed, becoming more bold and more comprehensive. At first, however, interim aims were stressed. At a press conference in Jerusalem on January 14, 1988 a 14-point memorandum was presented by Palestinian community leaders which emphasized the amelioration of the conditions of occupation. It called for repatriation of deportees, release of prisoners, withdrawal of the Israeli army from population centers and formal inquiries into the behavior of Israeli soldiers and settlers. It also demanded an end to the building of settlements and confiscation of land, the cancellation of Israeli taxes on Palestinians under occupation, and the removal of restrictions on building, trade, industry and agriculture. An end to Israeli violations of Muslim and Christian holy places was also part of the memorandum.

Two of the fourteen points stressed political aims: first, to "cancel all restrictions on political freedoms including restrictions on freedom of assembly and association [and to] hold free municipal elections under the supervision of a neutral authority." Second, to "remove restrictions on participation of Palestinians from the territories in the Palestine National Council . . . to ensure a direct input into the decision-making processes of the Palestinian nation by the Palestinians under occupation." Those political demands were linked to the request stated in the preamble to the memorandum that an international conference be convened, which would include the P.L.O., to negotiate an end to Israeli occupation and achieve peace. Thus, the central demands were concerned with dismantling the negative effects of the occupation. The long-term goal was self-determination and independence, but this was seen as remaining in the hands of the external powers and the P.L.O.

Until mid-summer, there was a separation between immediate goals, which Israel could effect unilaterally through direct dealings with the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza, and long-range aims. Earlier, in the spring, the residents had refused to meet with U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz on the grounds that discussions about convening an international peace conference could only be held with the P.L.O. By August strategic demands overshadowed tactical ones. That shift came about in part because of the drastic change in King Hussein's position, epitomized in his statement on July 31 that Jordan was no longer responsible for the West Bank. The shift was also a response to signs of change within the P.L.O. as indicated by the document issued by Bassam Abu Sharif, P.L.O. spokesman and close advisor to Arafat, in June. Abu Sharif proposed direct talks between the P.L.O. and Israel, an

internationally supervised referendum in the occupied territories, a transitional period before a Palestinian state would be established, and the deployment of a United Nations' buffer force on the Palestinian side of its border with Israel. Although some leading members of the P.L.O. denounced the statement, it articulated the perspective of many residents of the West Bank and Gaza.

Most importantly, the shift to strategic demands marked the coming-of-age of the Palestinian uprising. The self-confidence of the participants grew as their organizational acumen was tried and tested. They recognized the role that was necessary for the inhabitants of the occupied territories in the articulation of a peace plan. They were disturbed by Syria's continuing effort to divide the Palestinian movement, epitomized by Syrian support for the rebel Fatah forces of Abu Musa in ousting Arafat's men from the refugee camps near Beirut. They were concerned when Arafat waffled after key P.L.O. leaders criticized Abu Sharif. And they were irritated that wealthy Arab rulers withheld contributions to the struggle despite their pledges of support at the special Arab summit conference held in Algiers in June. They saw Shultz's initiative falter in the face of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's intransigence, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' hesitation, and the continued American refusal to talk directly with the P.L.O. Thus, if the *intifadah* were to achieve tangible results it would require a Palestinian initiative which, in and of itself, would alter the terms of the debate and capitalize on the new reality created by the uprising.

That creative thrust was articulated in the program of action that the Israeli security forces seized from the office of Faisal Husseini, director of the Arab Studies Society and scion of the leading nationalist family in Jerusalem. Husseini

was placed under administrative detention on July 31, shortly after he addressed a Peace Now rally in Tel Aviv. All of the Society's documentation was confiscated, including a draft outline for a strategy to call for independence and create a Palestinian state.

Aware that Israeli security men would soon discover and reveal the document, Palestinian activists transmitted a summary to an American journalist. In that manner, the Palestinians could ensure that an accurate version would be published.<sup>2</sup> The document proposes that it is time for the Palestinians to move from the phase of clashes to the phase of political initiative. This would change the terms of international debate from the issue of the P.L.O. recognizing Israel to one of recognizing a Palestinian state established on land occupied by Israel. For once the Palestinians would force a *fait accompli* on Israel as well as on the Arab states and the world community. The declaration of independence would be based on U.N. resolution 181—the original partition plan of 1947. This would, it was believed, give it international legitimacy and underline the intent to establish a Palestinian state alongside Israel, rather than replace it. The final borders would be the result of negotiation. (As Hussein explained to a fellow Palestinian: every time Israelis talked about retaining parts of the West Bank, the Palestinians would talk about the 1947 lines, until both sides could reach a reasonable agreement. The 1967 lines would probably be the ones that the international community would endorse, but some mutually agreed adjustments are possible.)

The document specified that the P.L.O. should establish an interim government with two parts, one outside the territories and the other inside. The interim executive body outside would become the government, headed by mem-

bers of the P.L.O. executive committee, with Arafat as head of state and Farouq Qaddumi as foreign minister. The leaders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, George Habash, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Naif Hawatmeh, would also be included in the government. The P.N.C. would branch out into a parliament that would include 152 prominent individuals from the occupied territories. Its internal organs would comprise West Bank and Gazan members of parliament and an interim administrative body, drawn from the members of the legislature. The administrative body would establish a hierarchical state apparatus dealing with health, education, and the economy, *inter alia*, and would coordinate with the existing local popular committees.<sup>3</sup>

Once the interim institutions were formed and the P.L.O. had established an interim government, the Palestinians would seek to enter negotiations with Israel under the rubric of an international conference. A delegation consisting of individuals from inside and outside the territories would negotiate on such issues as the final borders, the future of Jewish settlements, and the resolution of the refugee problem. As soon as Israeli armed forces withdrew from the West Bank and Gaza, elections would be held to choose a form of government and to elect a president, based on a multiparty democracy.

This ambitious plan was to be issued a week before the next meeting of the Palestine National Council. The idea was that the P.N.C. would endorse the declaration of independence and begin to seek diplomatic recognition from a wide variety of states. In a sense, the document was a bold plan designed to force the hand of the P.L.O. The leaders outside would no longer be able to vacillate once they were presented with a clear, precise document drafted by the

leaders of the *intifadah*. Even the rejectionists, it was assumed, would have to back the plan, in recognition of the sacrifices made by the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The premature disclosure of the plan caused some discomfort, in part because the document was still a draft, and in part because the names of the proposed legislators fell into the hands of the Israeli security apparatus. Nevertheless, the timing was not too harmful. Coming just after King Hussein's dramatic abdication of legal and administrative authority over the West Bank, it stimulated clear thinking among Palestinians about their own future. It compelled the Israeli and international publics to recognize that a credible peace plan was being drafted by the Palestinians themselves. Moreover, it served notice on the P.L.O. that the people living inside the territories were prepared to take the initiative, pulling the P.L.O. along behind them if necessary.

Over the course of nine months, the *intifadah* had thus given birth to a concrete proposal for an independent state. The Palestinians were no longer willing to accept interim measures that would merely improve their conditions. Rather, they sought a long-term strategic resolution of the problem that would not only allow Palestinian statehood alongside Israel, but would also transform the relationship between the two intensely nationalist peoples into a pragmatic *modus vivendi*.

#### 4. Israeli Reactions

The Israeli government and public were caught off guard by the *intifadah*. Defense Minister Rabin reacted by intensifying his Iron Fist policy, arguing that to use the strongest possible force against the demonstrators would

end the riots swiftly. When the Palestinians continued instead to confront live ammunition with stones and taunts, Rabin authorized soldiers to break the arms and legs of demonstrators. Furthermore, the armed forces imposed lengthy curfews, demolished houses, threw tear gas into homes, and detained more than 5,000 persons. The military presence in the territories was increased nearly 10-fold and annual reserve duty for men was doubled from the usual 30 days to 62.

The government applied severe economic pressure on the Palestinian population. Soldiers prevented villages from exporting their ripe fruit and tried to compel shops to open (or else forced them to close), imposed new taxes on the residents and fined house owners and parents at random for graffiti on walls and stone-throwing by children. Meanwhile, the Israeli economy itself was squeezed by the cost of the *intifadah* and the loss of revenue that it entailed. U.S. Embassy estimates in the summer of 1988 revealed that additional military and police expenditures ran to \$120 million a month. Indirect costs in lost tourism, decreased sales of Israeli products to Palestinians and lowered production due to the drop in Arab workers were estimated at \$33 million a month. According to the minister of economy, as of July 1988, \$600 million had already been lost in tourism, exports and production, with tourism alone expected to drop by 30 percent in 1988.<sup>4</sup>

Within Israel, the *intifadah* further polarized views on the future of the territories. Polls indicate that those who already wanted to retain the West Bank and Gaza and rejected Palestinian self-rule have hardened in their views. Some even advocate the expulsion of the Palestinian residents, a policy move now cloaked under the neutral term "transfer." On the other hand, those who already sought a

territorial compromise and a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians of the occupied territories and Jordan also feel reinforced in their views. The long-term dangers confronting the demographic character and democratic values of Israel appear even more pronounced than before.

Shamir's remarks in particular play on Israeli fears. After an Israeli farmer was killed, he stated: "We stand before a wild and murderous phenomenon, the fruit of fanatical hatred that seeks the death of all citizens of Israel."<sup>6</sup> Publicly he rejects the idea that the uprising is directed solely against the occupation; instead, by reviving Jewish fears of annihilation, Shamir seeks to block any territorial or political compromise. Nevertheless, reports continue to surface that the Prime Minister's office has prepared documents for a Palestinian administration over the West Bank and Gaza, indicating that Shamir is prepared to play the role of a political realist at some point down the road. That change in stance would lead to at least a partial redress of Palestinian grievances.

Peres, by contrast, talks about the need for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and heavily-populated parts of the West Bank. Although he preferred to negotiate with King Hussein, he has adjusted to the king's declarations that he is no longer responsible for the West Bank. Peres' Labor Party now calls for negotiations with Jordan on issues involving their common border and peaceful relations in addition to negotiations with the residents of the West Bank and Gaza about the future of the territories.

If the *intifadah* has forced Israeli politicians to begin to reappraise their position on the future of the territories, whether admitted publicly or not, its most remarkable impact has been on the thinking of Israeli officers in the

armed forces. By June, polls and interviews indicated that the majority of generals then serving believed, first, that the consequences of holding the territories would be worse strategically than relinquishing them and that, second, making such territorial concessions in the context of peace accords would not encourage Arab states to go to war with Israel.<sup>6</sup> The chief of staff stated bluntly during a walk through curfew-silenced Beit Sahur that the struggle was a political one, which could not be resolved by military means. Other officers added that it was clear that the general public backed the P.L.O. and was not being coerced to support the *intifadah*. While some officers and soldiers apparently support the policy of using force to crush the Palestinian rebellion, others are troubled by the role which they are compelled to play and prefer a diplomatic solution to the national conflict.

### 5. *Prospects for Change*

The situation remained fluid as the Palestinians awaited the convocation of the P.N.C., Israelis geared up for parliamentary elections on November 1, 1988, and both assessed the prospects in the American presidential campaign. Nonetheless, the moves made by the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza to thaw the *status quo* and articulate their goals had transformed the political equation in the region.

In fact, the P.L.O. leadership responded to those initiatives. The P.N.C. session in November endorsed the idea of establishing an independent state on the West Bank and Gaza with United Nations resolutions 181 and 242 as its legal underpinning. The *intifadah* had clearly given the P.L.O. the confidence to make that historic move. Moreover, after painful internal debate, the Reagan Administration agreed to start a political dialogue with the P.L.O.,

the essential first step toward peace negotiations. Israel, caught off-guard by the rapid shifts in the American and Palestinian camps, re-formed its National Unity government and insisted that the P.L.O. was still not an acceptable interlocuter.

As recently as one year ago, observers assumed that Israel's creeping annexation of the West Bank and Gaza was irreversible. Israel ruled supreme, the Palestinians were submissive and the Arab world was preoccupied with its protracted war with Iran. Today, the situation has been transformed. The world will watch with trepidation and hope as the various parties jockey for position. The overriding concern remains clear: will they struggle for a realistic diplomatic formula to resolve the decades-old conflict or will they simply let another opportunity slip by and allow the region to revert to ever more bitter strife?

## NOTES

This paper originated in a lecture given by the author at the American Research Center in Egypt in August 1988. Additional material was incorporated after a visit to the occupied territories that same month. An expanded essay on the *intifadah* is available as a *Report* of Universities Field Staff International.

1. The Arabic word for victims of the *intifadah* is *shahid* or martyr.

2. The *Los Angeles Times* referred to the document a day before Israeli television, citing security sources, revealed its existence. The complete text was printed by *The Jerusalem Post* on August 12, 1988. The document is different from the proposal circulated by Jerome Segal, a professor at the University of Maryland, which was written in English and was also seized from Hussein's office. The basic idea of a two-state solution is the same, but the conceptualization and discussion of process are distinct.

3. Palestinians with whom I discussed the plan said they assumed that, in practice, the legislative body would never meet and that the 152 members would instead be consulted by the administrative authority on policy matters. Israeli restrictions would presumably make it impossible for the

legislature to convene and, for a period, the administration itself would have to function underground.

4. Reuter News Agency, July 25, 1988.

5. Reuter News Agency, June 24, 1988.

6. The poll was by Dahaf and the interviews were in *Yediot Ahronot*, cited in *al-Ahram*, July 28, 1988. The Israeli chief of staff's statement was carried by Reuter on July 15, 1988.

# A VISION OF PEACE



Charles McC. Mathias, Jr.



Even as we commemorate in sadness the anniversary of the tragic death of Zafer al-Masri, I am happy to see so many old friends here today, all gathered together because we have some common concept of what is happening in the Middle East.

It would be appropriate under any circumstances to meet annually to honor the memory and commitment of Zafer al-Masri, to remember the kinds of things for which he stood. For he was a man of peace, a man whose work and example should stand as an inspiration for generations to come for all who care for peace.

But it is particularly appropriate that we should meet this year [1988] to remember him because the situation in the West Bank as, indeed, in all of Palestine, is so critical. And this is the very kind of situation which he sought to avoid through his work.

My own acquaintance with him was not a long one; in fact, it was very brief. But it was one of those rare, intense experiences in which you immediately begin to communicate on an intimate level, avoiding the more usual period of gradual familiarization. That sort of dialogue was necessary, given the circumstances that prevailed then and have worsened now for the Palestinians. We spoke for several hours about everything under the sun related to the Middle East. At that time, he had just assumed his duties as mayor of Nablus, so we talked at length of the complicated reasons behind this decision. He had been elected—not appointed—deputy-mayor in the last legitimate election,

and the mayoralty had become vacant in the meantime. When we spoke, Zafer al-Masri was about to assume that office based on the popular mandate he had received in the last election rather than on any agreement with the occupation authorities.

As he spoke of his aspirations for the Palestinians, it became clear that one of the priority items on his agenda as mayor was to moderate the harshness of the Israeli occupation in its effect on the daily lives of the people. Here, let me say that one of the values of this symposium is that it helps those of us in the United States, a world apart from the occupied territories, to understand a little more clearly exactly what it's like to live in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. Because Zafer al-Masri was trying to moderate the severity of that life, to lessen the restrictions on simple, basic things that to those of us here seem merely the normal attributes of life: the ability to turn on the tap and get water—that doesn't seem to be a very extravagant sort of freedom; the ability to flick a switch and get electricity or to have access to other utilities; the ability to make simple business transactions, including to go to a bank to make a deposit or a withdrawal, to handle your own funds as people do all over the world. All of these very basic functions of normal life are simply denied to Palestinians under occupation. And if these services are available at all, they are only available under very limited and restricted conditions.

The knowledge in the United States of the inherent difficulty, to put it mildly, for the Palestinians in conducting even simple, basic aspects of daily life has been very limited up until now. This conference, I think, will enhance the awareness here of the meaning of occupation.

Economic restrictions abound. The fact is that a farmer who raises a crop on the West Bank can't simply take it to the best market and sell it for the best price. On the contrary, he is subjected to some of the most severe protectionist restrictions in the world. And while we debate protectionism on Capitol Hill here in Washington, the protectionism we discuss can't begin to approach the level and rigidity of the protectionism which exists on the West Bank and in Gaza.

That's one of the aspects of the occupation that Zafer al-Masri spoke about to me and one that he hoped his influence and position would be able to overcome in order to ameliorate life for the average Palestinian. I could see that he was a realist. He knew that he had to face the very real and hard fact of the occupation. But he also knew that something had to give, sooner or later, and so he tried to bridge the huge gap in the daily lives of the Palestinians.

He took a broad view in his analysis of the situation and the prospects for change. He was very proud of the potential of the Palestinian people of the West Bank and Gaza. He spoke with enormous pride of their educational achievements—for Palestinians have attained tremendous educational goals, some of the highest of any people anywhere in the world. He wanted to see them achieve the even greater potential to which he thought they were entitled and of which he knew they were capable.

But he knew that that potential could not be achieved without some change. What he was really doing was opting for change and risking his life for that chance at change. He was full of ideas—about education, about jobs, about ways to offer hope to the young Palestinians who had so little hope since the opportunities for jobs were so few.

But I think that what moved Zafer al-Masri most of all, and what consequently moved me in our conversation, was this vision he had that it was possible somehow to find a way for his people to live in peace. And that was his bottom line.

After these several hours of fascinating, stimulating and very open communication that we shared, it came time for him to go. "What about your own safety?" I asked. "Are you safe? What do you do to take care of yourself?" He smiled in reply: "I'm alright. I'm surrounded by my friends." And so we parted and I returned home; only a week later I heard the terrible news.

And so a man of peace died a violent death, as so many men of peace have before him, the victim of bitter strife and hatred. What is clear in the aftermath of this tragedy is that we need the kind of vision that he demonstrated as we approach the very difficult problems of the Middle East. We need that kind of vision now, perhaps more than ever before because of the renewed violence that has erupted between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And we need that kind of vision not only in the West Bank but all over the world, including right here in Washington, and on Capitol Hill. One of the first things that ought to be done there is to repeal the Congressional mandate to close the P.L.O. permanent observer mission to the United Nations.<sup>1</sup> That is a very modest operation but is at least one form of communication between peoples, and we need more communication. Certainly that was part of the message of Zafer al-Masri—to enhance communication and understanding.

Of course, we need the spirit of Zafer al-Masri in the Middle East more than any other place. We need to have people talking and working together, communicating

directly, as he himself was willing to do. And we need this spirit in the larger sense for I think ultimately that the problems of the Middle East are only going to be settled with some kind of international conference. I firmly believe we ought to expend every effort possible to bring about an international conference. It has to be inclusive: it must include the Soviet Union, Syria and all of the elements of the Middle East. And it needs to bring together all of those parties in such a way as to ensure an equal exchange of views.

I suppose the message I would take from this assembly here today with people of common concern for peace in the Middle East is that there is much work to do. There is work for each one of us. And we should put our hands to it now before it is too late.

## NOTE

On June 29, 1988, in *The United States of America vs. the Palestine Liberation Organization et al.*, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York held that the P.L.O. mission was protected under the United Nations Headquarters Agreement, a U.S. treaty obligation which was not superseded by the U.S. Anti-terrorism Act.



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