

# Palestine Focus

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50¢

## Iran/Iraq War U.S. Threatens Escalation

By Steve Goldfield

Since the Iraqi bombing of a U.S. warship in the Persian/Arabian Gulf and the Reagan administration's commitment to provide protection to Kuwaiti ships by flagging them in American colors, the Iran/Iraq war has moved from its "back burner" status to a "front burner" topic of debate. This is now a grave risk of widening the war. Hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops from the Central Command are poised to attack, waiting for the slightest excuse to do so. After the Reagan administration's failures in the region—from its unjustifiable attack on Libya to its disastrous involvement in Lebanon—and amidst its grave political crisis over the Iran/Israel/contra scandal, all the danger signals are flashing bright red.

This ominous state of affairs is filled not only with risks but with irony. The first irony is that though it was an Iraqi plane which bombed the U.S. frigate Stark in May, the United States has weighed in on Iraq's side in the conflict: Kuwait is a backer of Iraq against Iran. Add this strange reaction to the Reagan administration's now well-publicized sales of weapons to Iran (including missiles to shoot down Iraqi planes) via Israel while it was simultaneously providing Iraq (which has air superiority) with aerial photographs of Iranian targets. In light of its behavior in fanning the war, recent U.S. government talk of seeking peace can hardly be viewed as sincere.

The second irony is that the United States, in promising to guarantee protection to Kuwaiti ships, finds itself in the embarrassing position of being on the same side as the Soviet Union, which has also offered protection to Kuwaiti ships. In such a light, U.S. insistence that it needs to protect the Gulf from an incipient Soviet "threat" rings hollow, indeed. The real threat, from the standpoint of the Reagan administration, is that the Soviet Union is winning new friends by carrying out what it sees as its responsibilities to seek a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In June, for example, the Soviet Union called for all foreign military forces to leave the Gulf.



Iranians and others opposed to Iran/Iraq war marching in Middle East contingent of April 25, 1987 mobilization for Peace, Jobs, and Justice.

The debate over U.S. policy centers on a growing reluctance in Congress to allow the Reagan administration to entangle American troops once again in a war in the Middle East in an attempt to shore up the U.S. military/strategic position in the Gulf. The administration sees an opportunity to divert attention from its failures in Lebanon and Iran and shore up support for its contra war in Central America. The Congress fears that American impotence to achieve its objectives will lead to further deterioration of the United States' image and role as a world power and lead to more losses of American lives without victories which can be used to justify them. Despite Congressional fears, the Reagan administration is going ahead full-steam.

While it has not attracted much attention, there are some tactical differences between U.S. and Israeli approaches in the Iran/Iraq war. While both have preferred to keep the war going, Israel has a pronounced tilt toward Iran and the United States a growing leaning toward Iraq. But neither Israel nor the United States is totally committed to either side. The strategists of intervention prefer to leave their options open. As Henry Kissinger commented about the Iran/Iraq war, "The ultimate American interest is that both sides should lose."

Continued on page 7

### Editorial

## The Balfour Declaration Seventy Years Later

On November 2, 1917, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Alfred Balfour, wrote to Lord Rothschild stating a "declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations" approved by the British cabinet. The Balfour Declaration became one of the most significant documents in the Zionist/Palestinian conflict, and its single-sentence message bears repeating in full:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

Every word in the declaration was argued over, with many drafts written and rejected,

each attempting to smooth over contradictions between conflicting factions within the British government, until the final statement was issued. Concessions in the wording were even made to mollify anti-Zionist Jews, such as Lord Montague, who rejected the whole idea, resulting in the phrases about protecting the civil and religious rights of the native inhabitants and the rights of Jews in other countries (but not their national or political rights). Despite the ambivalent phrases or qualifiers, the intent of the declaration was clear: The British Empire gave its official stamp of approval to the Zionist colonizing project.

The British, in the midst of World War I, having only recently made false promises of independence to its Arab allies fighting the Ottoman Empire, needed to project its colonial designs over the Middle East. By giving its official nod to the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the British sought to encourage the development of a Western-

oriented settler community that would "facilitate the achievement" of the establishment of imperial power in what would become the British Mandate in Palestine. To the leaders of the British Empire, the Jews settling in their colony would constitute a pro-British community. Herbert Samuel, the first British High Commissioner of Palestine,

said it forthrightly when he expressed his pleasure at how wonderful it would be to have "a little Jewish Ulster in a sea of Arabism," referring to the previous colonization of northern Ireland by Protestant settlers.

Continued on page 7

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# "Seize the present while there is still a measure of hope"

By Rev. Benjamin Weir

*Rev. Benjamin Weir is former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, a veteran of over thirty years of voluntary work in the Middle East, and a former hostage held in Lebanon. He gave the speech, excerpted below, at a United Nations symposium on Palestine in June 1987. He was interviewed at the same time for Palestine Focus by Maggie el-Estwani. A short excerpt from that interview is also included here.*

When I reflect on the effects of the unresolved issue over the last thirty years of the Palestinian need for a homeland and independence, I can only say *the cost is too great to allow the situation to continue festering any longer.*

*We must take into account the cost of human lives.*

I think of Shahini, a Palestinian woman in her twenties, who easily looked forty years old. She told me with excruciating grief how she held her infant in her arms in a basement shelter until the infant died after many days for lack of nourishment and medical care. That happened during the frightful siege of Tal al-Zaatar camp in the sweltering heat of 1976 in Lebanon.

The infant was but one of numbers of persons who died that terrible summer. Ultimately the whole settlement, a sizeable town, was made homeless. Permanent scars, many of them invisible, marked adults, youth, and children who survived.

I count the cost of lives during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. I can still see young men with guns riding off at sunset in a truck to battle Israeli tanks and artillery on the southern edge of Beirut.

*We must also count the cost to the human spirit.*

I recall sitting with Abu Ahmad on his apartment verandah hearing him tell of younger years in Palestine with Jewish friends as neighbors and partners in business. A social worker and a former magistrate recounted similar friendly relations with Jews and wistfully wished those earlier days and cordial connections could return.

I also remember in the late sixties Karamah camp on the east bank of Jordan after an Israeli reprisal raid—mud, and cold wind, and flopping tents—people angry, and wailing, and hopeless.

I think of the horror on my daughter's face as she returned from nursing duty at the American University Hospital in Beirut in the summer of 1982. She told of patients arriving with flesh still burning from phosphorus bombs. I winced at the memory of funeral processions outside that hospital day after day.

During that awful summer I debated with Palestinian Christians who could no longer read the Old Testament because of the pain they associated with the name of Israel.

I still meet and hear from Palestinians and other Arab-Americans in the United States who smart from prejudice and discrimination against people of Arabic background. The cost to the human spirit is too great.

In the early 1960s I visited the beginnings of Bir Zeit University near Ramallah on the West Bank. I was impressed with the expectation that from humble beginnings a university could be de-

veloped. Later, friends and colleagues left comfortable teaching posts elsewhere to join a faculty dedicated to prepare young Palestinian leadership for the future.

But Israeli military authorities were determined to prevent Palestinian leadership from developing and becoming effective. Expulsion of political and intellectual leaders through the years has become systematic. Hanna Nasir, president of Bir Zeit University, was one of the early deportees in the late 1970s. This was done without legal charges or trial. Taysir Aruri, a physicist at Bir Zeit University, was subject to administrative detention by the military authorities. He was arbitrarily imprisoned without charges or trial for four years between April 1974 and January 1978. Aruri was brought before the military commander at six-month intervals and on two occasions was offered release from prison if he would leave the West Bank. Amnesty International adopted Aruri as a prisoner of conscience, which contributed to his eventual release.

Closure of Palestinian universities, as well as other institutions, has become a common practice of occupation authorities. In the decade between 1975 and March 1985, Bir Zeit University was closed ten times for periods varying from two weeks to three months. Al Najah University was closed six times between 1981 and 1985, once for three months, another time for four months. Its president, Dr. Munther Salah, became a target of the authorities in September 1986, when both his work permit and residency permit were revoked while he was visiting Jordan; he learned of it through a television announcement. When he attempted to re-enter the West Bank, his admission was prevented by Israeli border police. He was not allowed to return to his home in Nablus to collect his belongings. The reason given by occupation officials for the summary revocations was that Dr. Salah had engaged in "nonacademic activities." Prominent among his offenses was his criticism of King Hussein for breaking relations with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

*The cost in human spirit is too great.*

*We must take seriously also the cost in lives.*

Opportunities for facing the issue of Palestinian self-determination and freedom have been passed by. The focus of international political will on conditions that might eventually lead to new understandings and reconciliation has been blurred.

During forty years of conflict, five major wars have intervened in 1948, 1956, 1967, 1973, and 1982. The legacy of these conflicts has spilled over far beyond the issue of a homeland for Palestinians. The tidal wave of contention, abuse, and mistrust has engulfed many other people and issues.

One example among many is my experience with Shi'ite Moslem extremists who kidnapped me in May 1984. At first they did not seem to know who I was but thought I was simply an American on the street. I asked why I was taken and was told "for political reasons" but given no further explanations. Two months later, I learned that I was being kept hostage against the release of seventeen men held in Kuwait. I was aware that this small extremist group was not representative of the large Shi'ite community in Lebanon but, in fact, was denounced by many of them, as well as by the Moslem community at large.

*Continued on page 7*



Jeffrey Blankfort

## FOCUS On Action

By Steve Goldfield

The Sacramento chapter of the November 29th Committee for Palestine has proposed a resolution to the Human Rights/Fair Housing Commission of the City and County of Sacramento condemning violation of the human and democratic rights of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Israeli military occupation. At a July 22 hearing the commission agreed to consider the resolution. Accompanying the resolution is a petition calling for an end to the occupation and for the convening of a U.N.-sponsored Middle East peace conference. The resolution calls on the commission to sign the petition and to send it along with the resolution to the president, California Senators Cranston and Wilson, Representatives Matsui and Fazio, the Sacramento City Council, and the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors.

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The Fourth North American Regional NGO (non-government organization) Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held at United Nations headquarters in New York, June 24-26, 1987. The declaration from the symposium emphasizes support for the international peace

conference outlined in UN General Assembly resolution 38/58 C as "indispensable in securing a just and durable solution to the question of Palestine." Resolution 38/58 C mandates that all parties to the conflict, including the five permanent members of the Security Council and the PLO, participate. The NGO resolution also reaffirms "the international consensus that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people" along with the Palestinian people's rights to return, to self-determination without external interference, and to establish an independent Palestinian state on its own national territory under the leadership of the PLO.

Among many other items, the North American NGOs recommended the convening of a model International Peace Conference with NGO representatives from Israel, the PLO, the United States, United Kingdom, France, China, the Soviet Union, and Arab parties to the conflict.

The November 29th Committee for Palestine was elected vice chair of the North American NGO coordinating committee and was also designated to represent the North American NGOs at the international NGO symposium in Geneva in September.

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The November 29th Committee for Palestine received a letter of appreciation from Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat in July 1987. Chairman Arafat thanked the committee for its continued commitment to work for Palestinian rights. He was responding to a solidarity statement and message sent by participants in a New York event organized by the November 29th

Committee for Palestine to commemorate the 20th anniversary of Israeli occupation in June.

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Archbishop John Quinn of the Archdiocese of San Francisco presided over a special memorial service and Arabic mass to remember the Palestinians and Lebanese massacred at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut in September 1982. The mass included Moslem, Protestant, and Greek Orthodox prayers and was followed by a reception featuring poetry and a presentation by Palestine National Council member Samir Totah. The service and reception were sponsored by the Ramallah Club of San Francisco and the entire Palestinian Arab community in the Bay Area.

The following day, August 16, the Ramallah Club held its tenth annual Palestine Cultural Day festival in the San Francisco County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park. Thousands of Palestinians and their supporters gathered to watch traditional Palestinian music and dance, to eat Palestinian food, and to reaffirm the continuation of Palestinian national life in exile.

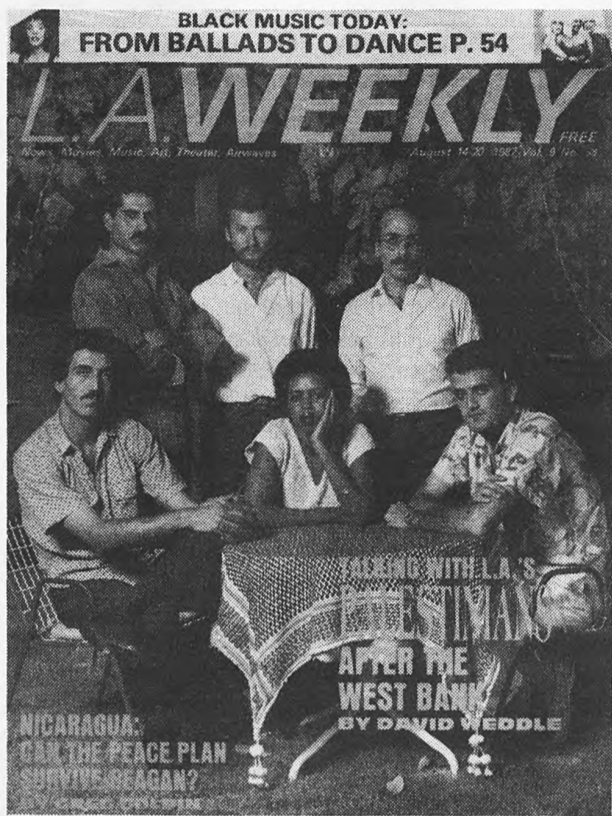
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*Palestine Focus* received a letter from Philippa Strum, president of the American-Israeli Civil Liberties Coalition. She writes, "While Rabbi Balfour Brickner and I were glad to lend our names to the organizing of the Committee to Defend Michel Warshawsky and the Alternative Information Center, and the Coalition has sent repeated letters of protest about the matter to Israeli officials and newspapers, current credit belongs elsewhere.

*Continued on page 6*



# The First Amendment under Government Attack



Front page of L.A. Weekly which reaches several hundred thousand readers in the Los Angeles area. Another example of broad coverage of the L.A. case.

By Jeanne Butterfield

France got rid of 3,000 Palestinians, but we can't get rid of eight." This complaint by INS deputy counsel William Joyce sums up the U.S. government's frustration as the Los Angeles Eight regained the initiative in a series of court battles over the past several weeks.

The Los Angeles Eight, seven Palestinians and a Kenyan woman, were arrested on January 26 and charged with affiliation with an organization which advocates "world communism," namely the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a member organization of the PLO. The government's political objective was to use these arrests to strike fear into the heart of the Arab community in the United States and to silence the movement in support of Palestinian rights, Palestinian self-determination under the leadership of the PLO, and Middle East peace.

The significance of the arrests as a "test case" was exposed by the revelation a few days after the arrests of an INS "Contingency Plan." The Contingency Plan targeted the Arab communities in the United States and outlined plans for the wholesale detention and deportation of up to ten thousand Arabs immigrants and other "undesirables" under the guise of a U.S.-declared "terrorist emergency."

The government appeared to have miscalculated in its choice of a test case, however. In spite of the fact that Palestinians and other Arab communities across the United States are the "weak link" in the civil liberties chain, a broad-based groundswell of support was organized in the weeks after the arrests. Public opinion judged harshly this most blatant attempt to silence pro-Palestinian sentiment in the United States. And many prominent individuals and organizations came forward to support the defendants and to uphold the Constitution.

Newspapers across the country called on the government to cease this assault on the first amendment and on the free-speech rights of Palestinians. Congressional hearings were proposed to investigate government misconduct, and efforts were begun to repeal or find unconstitutional the McCarran-Walter Act provisions under which the Los Angeles Eight were being charged.

As the government maneuvered to save face and regain lost ground, it suffered a major defeat in early May, when Immigration Judge Ingrid Hrycenko dismissed the entire case, based on the government's refusal to produce a key witness. Not to be outdone, the government immediately refiled identical charges, which by that time had been reduced to visa-violation charges against six of the eight and a different McCarran-Walter Act charge against the remaining two. The government apparently felt that the

"world communism" charge produced too much public opposition on First Amendment grounds, so it changed the charge to "affiliation with an organization which advocates the destruction of property."

These charges were to be formally reinstated at a June 26 hearing in Judge Hrycenko's courtroom. Instead of responding to the charges, defense attorney Marc Van Der Hout moved for dismissal of the charges against all eight on the grounds that the INS should be barred from resubmitting the same charges due to its misconduct during the first set of proceedings. Defense attorney Leonard Weinglass charged that the government "is making a farce and a sham out of a judicial proceeding."

ACLU attorney Mark Rosenbaum advised the judge that several INS officials made public statements that withholding the witness in the May hearing had been a deliberate effort to force the judge to drop the charges and have a new judge appointed to the case. Judge Hrycenko agreed to hear arguments on the defense motion to dismiss and scheduled them for July 23.

While Judge Hrycenko declined to dismiss the case after hearing arguments on July 23, she did agree that there had indeed been government misconduct in the case. She suspended proceedings on all charges until the issue of government misconduct has been appealed to the higher level of the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). The BIA is expected to rule by early 1988 on whether the record shows government misconduct sufficient to form grounds for dismissing the case.

INS counsel William Joyce, who had been flown in from Washington for the July 23 hearing, told the press, "Clearly when we brought these charges against them, we didn't know we would have the Weinglasses of the world on the other side," noting the key role played by nationally-recognized civil-liberties attorney Leonard Weinglass and the high-caliber defense team working on the case. The clear racial slur—that Arab-American immigrants were expected to be incapable of getting able defenders or were undeserving of a vigorous defense—was particularly shocking because a government attorney felt no hesitation in voicing it.

The next few months are key for the Los Angeles Eight. Not only must the defense team prepare the appeal to the BIA, but the Committee for Justice organizing efforts throughout the country must maintain their momentum through a several-month period of legal tangles. The national petition campaign, launched by the Committee for Justice in May, has gathered thousands of signatures calling on Attorney General Meese to drop the charges in the case. Fundraising events are being held in several cities to help raise the tens of thousands of dollars still needed for legal expenses. And the Los Angeles Eight themselves continue to speak at events, conferences, and conventions around the country to educate and build support for their case.

The next few months are also key for pro-Palestinian organizations and activists in the United States. While the tide has been at least temporarily turned back in the Los Angeles Eight case, the U.S. and Israeli governments have demonstrated their firm intent to silence pro-Palestinian and especially pro-PLO voices both in the United States and Israel.

As the United States and Israel try to engineer a Middle East "peace" between Israel and Jordan which excludes the PLO, Israel has systematically tried to silence any pro-PLO voice in the occupied territories. Hanna Siniora, for example, editor of the Arabic daily and English weekly Jerusalem newspaper *Al Fajr*, who has often been proposed as an "acceptable" and "moderate" Palestinian delegate in a peace negotiation process, has been threatened with arrest and trial for "PLO sympathies" by the Israeli minister of police.

And the United States is doing its part as legislators clamor to cosponsor legislation in both houses of Congress which would close the two PLO offices in the United States—in Washington and at the United Nations in New York. The Kemp and Dole bills, H.R. 2587 and S. 1203, would close the PLO offices by making it illegal to receive anything of value from the PLO or to expend funds from the PLO. At presstime, the Reagan administration was debating closing the Washington office by executive order.

Simultaneous legislation introduced by Congressman Swindall would restrict travel by representatives not only of the PLO, but of SWAPO, the African National Congress, and eighteen countries as well.

These Congressional campaigns, along with the Los Angeles case, target legitimate and constitutionally protected political organizing. The message is clear. As the 1988 electoral candidates form their platforms and as the U.S./Israeli "peace plans" take shape, whoever fails to oppose PLO participation in a genuine international peace conference will be accused of "terrorist" sympathies.

These campaigns not only threaten to close down the legitimate and entirely lawful PLO offices in Washington and New York, but they threaten democratic rights in the United States in the broadest sense. A charge of a "PLO connection" could be made against supporters of Palestinian rights to prevent the publication of a pro-Palestinian newspaper, the holding of a Palestinian cultural event, or the raising of charitable funds for medical care for Palestinian refugees. The chilling effect on the growing movement for Palestinian rights in the United States could be devastating. The irony is that most Americans, as a matter of fact, recognize the importance of the PLO to the Palestinian people. A *Los Angeles Times* poll, published June 3, 1987, found that 50 percent of all Americans favor negotiations with the PLO; only 39 percent were opposed. The rest were undecided.

Many prominent individuals and organizations have realized the stakes of the Dole/Kemp and Swindall bills. Among those defending the PLO offices are former hostage and Presbyterian leader Rev. Benjamin Weir, Nadine Meyer of the General Board of the United Methodist Church, Jack O'Dell of the National Rainbow Coalition, and leaders of the New Jewish Agenda. The ACLU has written an extensive brief criticizing the legislation, and Rep. George Crockett of the Congressional Black Caucus and eight other members of Congress are currently circulating a "Dear Colleague" letter in which they urge other Members not to sign on as cosponsors of the Kemp bill.

The *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Minneapolis Tribune* have all editorialized against the move to close the PLO offices. The ACLU brief sums up the stakes of the proposed legislation: "We cannot begin down the path of picking and choosing organizations to which to afford First Amendment protection—or the First Amendment will quickly come to provide no protection at all."

The stakes of the LA case remain high as well. Should the government succeed in deporting any of the eight under the McCarran Act, it would establish for the first time a legal precedent that immigrants do not have the same political rights guaranteed to U.S. citizens. This precedent would surely be used against any and all immigrant activists who dare to oppose U.S. government policy, not only in the Middle East, but in Central America, South Africa, or anywhere else around the globe. Who can afford to be silent?

We urge all who support peace with justice in the Middle East to do whatever you can to oppose the Dole, Kemp, and Swindall bills, and to support the Los Angeles Eight. Contact your senators and representatives, and send a mailgram by calling Western Union at (800-325-6000, operator 9172). A message will be sent which reads: "Strongly oppose legislation to close PLO information offices. This assault on free speech should be openly debated, including committee hearings. PLO represents the Palestinian people and is an essential party for Middle East peace talks." The mailgram costs \$4.50 and will be billed to your home phone.

Contributions and requests for petitions or information on the Los Angeles Eight Case, including a new national newsletter reporting on the case can be directed to the Committee for Justice, P.O. Box 4631, Los Angeles, CA 90051; 213-413-3209. □



# Two Visions for the Middle East

## Exclusivism of

By Ibrahim Abu-Lughod

Dr. Abu-Lughod is a member of the Palestine National Council and head of the political science department at Northwestern University. This article is excerpted from a speech Dr. Abu-Lughod presented at an event held by the November 29th Committee for Palestine in New York on June 6 in commemoration of the twenty years of occupation.

We are here to sum up the meaning of twenty years of occupation or forty years of the dismemberment of Palestine, five years of the dismemberment of Lebanon and the destruction of its people. We can enumerate and catalogue the loss of land, the loss of people, the anguish, the sorrow, and talk about the process which is informed by these experiences and about the potential for peace in the Middle East.

We assemble here to commemorate these various anniversaries and we also ought to reflect on the meaning of the events, to appreciate the experiences, and to expect the challenges that lie ahead for all of us in bringing peace and justice to Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs as well as the Lebanese people and other people who suffer from the same processes, like the African people in South Africa and people in Latin America.

Let me sum up what these processes are. We are talking about land. We are talking about people. And we are talking about the legitimization of a political process that saw the transformation of the land and the people of Palestine and Lebanon. We are talking about dispossession. Palestinians lost 60 percent of the land of the West Bank and Gaza.

But Palestinians have lost much more than that. We are talking about dispersion. The majority of the Palestinian people live elsewhere. I was born in Jaffa and grew up in Jaffa. I know my home and have memories there. I saw the 1948 war just when I finished high school. I had the misfortune of living in Beirut at the time of the Israeli siege. I didn't have to see it on television because I saw it in reality. I saw the destruction of Lebanon in 1982 where I was present in a symbolic way to rebuild an important national institution for the Palestinian people. The project was known then as the Open University, one of the first buildings to be air-raided on June 4. My office was located in the building.



We are talking about subjugation. Nowhere are the Palestinian people free. They either are militarily occupied, exist as second-class citizens in Israel, or live under different forms of occupation elsewhere in the world. Nowhere are the Palestinian people free to fashion their national institutions, to educate their children, to organize Palestinian societies free from the coercive power of the states in which they live. We are talking about politicicide, the determined policy of the Israel and the United States to destroy the Palestinian people politically.



The posters shown on these pages are from a joint Palestinian and Israeli exhibit which opened on June 5 in Jerusalem at the Nuzha/el-Hakawati theater and focused on the theme, "Down with the Occupation." The exhibit was sponsored by the League of Palestinian Artists and consisted of works by 65 Palestinian and progressive Israeli artists.

We are also talking about the process of ethnocide or genocide, the physical or cultural liquidation of the Palestinian people. The war in Lebanon was genocidal. Sabra and Shatila was genocidal. Deir Yassin was genocidal. The first institutions Israel attacked in Beirut were Al-Karameh Art Gallery and the Beirut Arab University which served the educational needs of the Palestinian people and the educational and cultural needs of the Palestine revolution. The artistic, literary, and cultural institutions of the Palestinian people were the first victims of Israel's attack. To destroy a people's culture makes it easier to destroy them politically as we know from the experience in the United States and Latin America.

The object of this process is to produce a particular fate for the Palestinian people which I have summarized as their "Indianization," that is, their assimilation or absorption, or their "bantustanization," that is, the creation of Palestinian bantustans.

When we talk about the occupation, twenty years or forty years of dismemberment, or the dismemberment of the Palestinian people in Lebanon, we are talking about concrete events. In one sense, we can catalogue the past, we can study facts and statistics, for example, 2-1/2 million people here, 2 million there, arbitrary punishment, torture, imprisonment of one-third to one-half of the Palestinian people, of every Palestinian male, and so on.

If we look at it this way, however, we are looking at it from the standpoint of the colonizer. The logic of the colonizer, if you follow it through, will tell you, as many Israeli apologists for the state of Israel would say, that we are beyond the time when we can correct this past, so the Palestinians cannot establish a state of their own because they don't have the land, because the Palestinians live elsewhere. Colonialism creates facts and facts presumably are irreversible.

All colonial facts are, in fact, reversible. Every single colonial fact is reversible. Our task is to understand how the Palestinian people and the Lebanese people and the Arab people and the African people in South Africa are proceeding on the path of national liberation to undo the colonial fact, as the Algerians have undone it, as the people of Mozambique have undone it, as the people of Angola have undone it, as many other people who have been formerly colonized under settler colonialism have undone it. We are cognizant of the slow process of undoing a colonial fact or cumulative colonial facts now part of the collective experience of the Palestinians and the Lebanese.

What are we the Palestinian people doing and what have we done? Palestinians, deprived of their independence and freedom, were able after a while, after a struggle, to re-create and consolidate and develop an indisputable national identity which is specifically Palestinian but liberated Palestinian. That has been one of the major accomplishments of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The PLO is three things. The PLO is all the Palestinian people. The basic law embodied in the national charter of the PLO enacted in 1964 says that all Palestinians, all Palestinians, are natural members of the PLO. We are Palestinian-Americans, Palestinian-Egyptians, Palestinian-Lebanese, Palestinian everything else, but above all we are Palestinians. The consolidation of our national identity means that the PLO has become a substitute or a surrogate of Palestine. It is my country. So when the National Council met in Algiers—and I was there—it was free Palestine. It was the only place in the world where six thousand or so Palestinians assembled from all corners of the world could discuss the national struggle and connect with each other under conditions of complete freedom.

Secondly, the PLO is a state, a state awaiting to be independent. It has its institutions. It has its flag. It has its symbols. It has its art.

The third sense of the PLO is that it is a government. But the PLO does not control the Palestinians by coercive measures the way a government does. We voluntarily pay taxes—there is no IRS for Palestinians. We pay, we support it and we obey it. It is the PLO's moral authority that makes the Palestinians a community regardless of the jurisdiction they live under.

When the U.S. government refuses to talk to the PLO, it is refusing to talk to the PLO in three senses: It refuses to talk to the community of the Palestinians, because everyone is a member of the PLO; it refuses to admit the existence of a Palestinian state, that is, the PLO; it refuses to talk with the executive organ of the Palestinians, that is, the government, chaired by Chairman Yassir Arafat. The United States government and Israel deny the legitimacy of the Palestinians, the legitimacy of their struggle, and the authority to negotiate their destiny and to implement their right to self-determination.

Thus the first part of the process of reversing colonial facts, the intended destruction, bantustanization, Indianization, or Armenianization, is the consolidation and strengthening of the Palestinian nation embodied in the PLO.

The second part is the political articulation of the Palestinian community. The Palestinians have created a unique multiparty political process. Independence creates a political process whereby we achieve unity as we did in Algiers and as we did before by a process of discussion. No agency of the PLO has coercive authority to make that political process legitimate. Because of the PLO's democratic processes, because of its attempt to arrive at decisions by a form of national consensus across geography, across different cultures, and across oppressive governments, we are able to pay allegiance to the executive agency, the state, the National Council, and elect our own representatives.

The Palestinians anchor their national strategy with that of the Third World, with Algeria, with Mozambique, with Angola, with Zimbabwe, and with the ANC. We have been informed by and have internalized that experience. So our people, whether in Bir Zeit, Nazareth, Beirut, Cairo, or wherever we are, we are actively engaged in the struggle in some way. National strategy means that you don't absent yourself from any process that has any bearing on your destiny. Hence we are active in this country and we are active in the educational process. We invite participation of the community.

The final point I come to is why we are active in Third-World movements. We support them, they support us; we work with socialist systems. The two powers actively hostile to the forces of national liberation are Israel and the Reagan administration and previous U.S. administrations, none of which have ever accepted the Palestinian right to self-determination.

Palestinians tend to be paranoid about the United States and they have a right to be. The United States does not really have anything specifically against Palestinians. The United States government with its successive administrations has never supported national liberation movements of any kind. The principle of national liberation is opposed



# Democracy?



דִּי לְכִיבּוּבָא  
בְּמַעַבְרַת הַיַּם הַיָּבֵשׁ  
DOWN WITH THE OCCUPATION

by the Reagan administration whether it is in Nicaragua, Cuba, Zimbabwe or in the ANC or with us. The United States is consistent. I have never known the Reagan administration to support the right of people to self-determination. It's not something against the Palestinians. It's simply a colonial principle. The United States and the Reagan administration are leading the struggle to maintain a particular status quo. Keep that in mind when they talk about the Jordanian option and the issue of the PLO.

In the final analysis, yes, there is the issue of land, people, and national independence, and it animates the Palestinians. But the struggle in the Middle East, the Palestinians being the fulcrum, is really a struggle between two visions of the future affecting Lebanon, Egypt, and Jordan. One vision is essentially a sectarian vision, the Zionist vision, be it Jewish Zionist, Christian Zionist,

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*The struggle in the Middle East is a struggle between two visions of the future: one is sectarian and Zionist, the other democratic and secular.*

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Islamic Zionist, Arab Zionist, or Kurdish Zionist. This exclusivist vision is literally supported by reactionary forces in the Arab world, in Israel, and in the United States, in order to produce an exclusivist, ethnicist Middle East, a Middle East based on some principle of exclusion.

The alternative vision subscribed to by the Palestinians, the Lebanese national movement, and by all Arab democratic movements, and by democratic movements throughout the world, is a democratic, secular vision, where your rights as an individual are basic to your existence as a citizen of the state you live in.

**T**he struggle in the Middle East is between these two visions. One is derived from a primal past, a primal ideology, an ideology supported by a tremendous amount of weapons but which remains essentially primitive. Whether it is Islamic, Jewish or Christian, it is medieval. It cannot succeed; it is against history. The only future for the people in the Middle East, as elsewhere in the world, is a democratic, secular future.

Only so long as the Palestinian struggle adheres to this kind of vision, to a democratic consolidation of Palestine itself, or Lebanon, or Jordan, or Egypt, can it succeed. The entire region has to be transformed because such a future is inevitable, not only in the Middle East but in the rest of the world. The Palestinian struggle for national self-determination, independence, sovereignty, and return, is fundamentally a struggle for freedom and justice so that Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs can live together in freedom and with justice. □

## REV. WEIR ... Continued from page 2

Though my captors were very guarded about their identity, insisting that I should never see them or learn much about them, eventually I was able to piece together bits of brief conversation. They were young Lebanese mostly in their early twenties. They were limited educationally. Because they were unemployed, they had joined this tiny extremist group to gain a small monthly "survival wage." They longed for "the good life," which meant for them a steady job, a family, a modest apartment, a car, and education for their children.

They were also reacting angrily to the 1982 Israeli invasion, which had swept over south Lebanon and its dominantly Shi'ite population with disastrous force. Villages were destroyed, thousands killed, tens of thousands made homeless. These young men were bursting with anger at Israel and against the United States for not restraining Israel. They were determined to drive out Israeli and U.S. influence from the area and to bring about a visionary Islamic order, which in their view would establish justice for Christians as well as Moslems. Though I could not accept their methods nor agree with their interpretation or objectives, I could easily understand their passion for justice and recognize their desire to be cham-

pions of the oppressed. What began as conflict over the rights of Palestinians had spilled over into the lives and communities of others.

To me it became apparent that a combination of unstable elements had combined to create an explosive mixture. The United States was uncritical of its massive support of Israel. Israel had engaged in harsh, aggressive, unbending policies. Frustrations and anger had mounted among Palestinians, who sought to address and correct injustice against them. Shi'ite extremists, as well as many other elements, were reacting to their own suffering and loss. All of this turmoil encouraged radical extremism, rather than development of a political process which would allow mutual participation in nonviolent negotiation of issues.

But we must not allow the seeds of discouragement or despair to grow. We recognize there have been terrible costs in human life, in human spirit, and in opportunities not grasped. *We must seize the present while there is still a measure of hope.*

**I** found concern for progress toward an international peace conference on the Middle East underscored in a letter received recently from an American friend I knew well in Lebanon, who wrote as a

member of the administrative staff from the Tantour Ecumenical Center between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. She observed:

"Living on the West Bank is somewhat ironic after two decades spent in Lebanon. Here one discerns the realities of the Middle East and its manifold tensions.

"Israel as an *apartheid* society is a grim place in which to reside, its injustices all-pervasive, repeatedly bringing one up short. In many ways it is a much more 'wearing' arena than civil-war-torn Lebanon. It is a window on another kind of suffering.... When I think about U.S. government policy toward Israel and support of this state, my disenchantment is total."

There are urgent reasons for an international peace conference because to go on as we have is to realize the cost is too great in terms of human lives, human spirit, and time and opportunities lost.

We must not allow ourselves or the international community to despair. We must seize the present moment while there is still a measure of hope. We must organize our resources to make a difference for the sake of peace with justice. □

**PF:** How are U.S. Christian denominations approaching peace and justice in the Middle East?

**BW:** There is cooperation among the mainline churches who are participants in the National Council of Churches. We support an ecumenical approach to these issues. I must honestly say that we have been very disappointed with the extent to which rather fundamentalist, conservative groups in the United States have undertaken a pro-Zionist stance, some even going so far as to welcome a kind of framework of thinking that would encourage the military solution, the further militarization of Israel, and, in their view, ultimately bring about a situation that in symbolic terms is described as armageddon. Ultimately, this is to say that in the end it will be the end of the Jewish people in fact and the triumph of those considered to be righteous. This kind of theology is very insidious, is very destructive, is not truly Biblical in its outlook. And this is one particular point at which we are trying to help develop a clearer theological understanding of what the Biblical message is about peace and justice in relationship to the theme of the Covenant and to the theme of the blessing that God gives to people who are especially concerned for the poor, the oppressed, and the alien. This is really the role in which the Christian church is cast, and we are trying to help bring about a deeper understanding. □



# Getting It All In FOCUS

By Hilton Obenzinger

"How could they get away with it?" many asked after viewing the NBC documentary, "Six Days Plus 20 Years: A Dream is Dying," narrated by Tom Brokaw. The program reflected only too well the brutality of the Israeli occupation, and sure enough NBC soon felt the inevitable pressure. "The program was very biased, unfair, and really presented a distorted view of Israel, beginning with the title of the show," a spokesman for Prime Minister Shamir said, explaining why the Israeli government banned NBC from any interviews with Yitzhak Shamir and other top Israeli officials. "It's retribution against tough journalistic reports, and that will discourage any real reporting from the region," Lawrence Grossman, president of NBC News, responded. "It's exporting Israeli censorship to this country, which is totally inappropriate."

The fact that the documentary made it on national TV in the first place is an indication of the increasing isolation of Israel's 20-year-old occupation—even by supporters of Israel! For years, the American viewing public was kept from seeing "any real reporting" on the Palestinians. After a breach like this the Israeli leadership wants to make damn sure it doesn't happen again. It's a welcome relief to say that NBC needs our support—so people should write to the network to back them up!

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While many democratic-minded Jews support a Palestinian state, this is often viewed, in part, as a way to protect a liberal Zionist vision of Israel. Uri Davis, an Israeli citizen who considers himself a Palestinian Jew,

certainly cannot be described in this camp. In *Israel: An Apartheid State* (Zed Press, \$10.50) Uri Davis pursues a rigorous examination of Zionism and the structures of the Israeli state to reach the conclusion expressed in the title. Davis systematically surveys the Law of Return allowing Jews instant citizenship, the absentee land laws which enable the Israeli state and Zionist organizations to seize the land of Palestinian refugees to hold for Jews only, the nationality laws which enshrine Jewish supremacy, the principles and practices of the Histadrut (the Israeli labor federation) and the famed kibbutzim which enforce discrimination against Palestinians, and other aspects of Israeli society.

His solution? Davis advocates a democratic, secular society, one in which Hebrew-speaking Israeli Jews would have cultural autonomy. To reach this goal, Davis proposes that Israeli Jews join with Palestinians for a joint struggle for justice, and he suggests that the PLO encourage Jewish membership in the liberation organization.

Ilan Halevi, author of *A History of the Jews* (Zed Press, \$12.50), has done just that; Halevi, also an Israeli Jew, is an official in the PLO. The history of the Jews that he presents is thought-provoking. More a philosophical, historical enquiry, this history is not for those seeking an introduction to this subject; I would suggest first acquainting yourself with the basic outlines of Jewish history before delving into his insightful essay.

Halevi examines all the crucial issues, starting in Biblical days, with a particular emphasis on the Oriental (non-European) Jewish communities. One of his ideas is that it has not been possible to describe Jews as a single community for centuries, with different historical dynamics in Eastern and Western Europe, in the Arab countries, Persia, etc. With the usual emphasis in pro-Zionist histories given to Ashkenazi (European) Jews, readers tend to get a distorted picture. With the majority of Israelis coming from Oriental backgrounds, this element of Jewish history needs to be examined closely.

Speaking of Oriental Jewish communities, the story of Iraqi Jews is particularly fascinating—and painful. *The Lure of Zion: The Case of the Iraqi Jews* by Abbas Shibliak

(Al Saqi Books, \$9.95) is a clear presentation of one of the strangest stories of the whole Zionist/Palestinian conflict—the forced stampede of Iraqi Jews to Israel at the beginning of the 1950s. The 2,500 year-old Iraqi Jewish community was decidedly anti-Zionist, showing no interest in leaving Iraq where they enjoyed basic rights and comfortable and significant positions in Iraqi society. But Shibliak traces the insidious combination of schemes by Zionist agents and collaboration by the conservative Iraqi monarchy which provoked the mass migration.

The key factor was the one the Zionists want the least known: Synagogues and other Jewish centers in Baghdad and other Iraqi cities were bombed by Zionist agents in a successful campaign to terrorize Iraqi Jews! This was an attempt by the Zionist movement—long suppressed but now reluctantly admitted with thorough documentation—to develop a climate of fear of anti-Jewish attacks by...organizing anti-Jewish attacks! Amazing!

These books are from British publishing houses. If you can't find them in local bookstores, one mail-order outlet is Humanities Press International, Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey 07716-1289. Write for their catalog.

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*NACLA Report on the Americas* is one of the leading journals on Latin American issues. Unlike most of the media—and Congress—this magazine has decided not to turn a blind eye to Israel's role in the Reagan administration's "neat" ideas in Nicaragua and Iran. Their March/April 1987 issue is entitled "The Israeli Connection: Guns and Money in Central America" and features articles by Milton Jamail, Margo Gutierrez, and Jane Hunter on Israel's role in Central America, with a particular focus on Israel's training and arming of the contras.

"Tough journalistic reports" is what they said at NBC News—and this magazine is clearly an example of the real thing. (One item from this issue: The three major TV networks ran only four pieces—a total of 12 minutes—on the Israeli presence in Central America between 1977 and 1984!) Write to NACLA: Report on the Americas, 151 W. 19th St., 9th Floor, New York, NY 10011. □

## FOCUS ON ACTION ... Continued from page 2

The Committee has a wide variety of sponsors and has taken on a life independent of the Coalition, with most of the work being done by Berta Langston.

"Only Latif Dori of the four 'leading Israeli peace activists' on trial for meeting with the PLO in Rumania is 'from the Oriental Jewish community.' Most of the 21 Israelis in the delegation are Ashkenazim. The followup group that met with the PLO in Hungary, however, does consist overwhelmingly of 'Oriental Jewish' Israelis. The Coalition has established a Free Speech Legal Defense and Education Fund to help pay the defendants' legal costs and educate the Israeli public about the civil liberties' implications of the law under which they have been charged. All contributions are tax-deductible. A broadcast-quality videotape we made of defendant Reuven Kammer discussing the case is available for \$15, including mailing costs.

"Your readers might like to know that the advertisement on behalf of the 'Los Angeles Eight' in the July 4 edition of the *Nation* was put together by myself and Professor Stuart Schaar of Brooklyn College."

The coalition's mailing address is Suite 1776, 275 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001, phone (212) 696-9603.

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The Middle East Philanthropic Fund and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee cosponsored a national tour by noted Lebanese composer, singer, and oud player Marcel Khalife and his group, El-Mayadeen, in August and September 1987. The group performed in ten cities across the United States: Detroit, Chicago, San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland (Oregon), Dallas, Houston, Washington (D.C.), Boston, New York, and Cincinnati. The group's 1985 tour was part of a fund-raising drive to begin construction of the Center to Protect Mothers and Infants in Tyre, Lebanon and for reconstruction

of Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut: Sabra, Shatila, and Bourj al-Barajneh. The 1987 tour will again support the center in Tyre, as well as a new maternity clinic in the central Bekaa Valley town of Jdita. The maternity clinic will serve obstetrics and gynecology needs of fifteen to twenty-five nearby villages in the Bekaa.

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The November 29th Committee for Palestine, the African National Congress, and SWAPO jointly sponsored an event to commemorate South African Women's Day in New York on August 10 with the title: "Women's Voices Speak from South Africa, Namibia, and Palestine." The event was cosponsored by the Union of Palestinian Women's Associations. All the sponsors spoke at the program.

Addressing the other side of the question—the solidarity between the governments of Israel and South Africa—Congressman Mervyn Dymally (D-CA), chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, accused Israel of lying over its arms dealings with South Africa. Dymally was interviewed for a documentary on Israeli-South African ties on British television. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, Dymally "described Israel's March 1987 assurance that it would sign no new arms contracts with South Africa as 'a very weak statement, a very compromising statement. I really don't believe the Israelis,' he went on. 'They have lied on this particular issue in the past, and I suspect they will continue to do so.'" The same *Jerusalem Post* article quoted Knesset Member Matti Peled of the Progressive List for Peace as saying, "There had been 'no curtailment' in Israel's arms sales to South Africa since it pledged to end all such sales in 1977. 'Nor do I expect any curtailment,' he said."

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Flash: A four-member Latino delegation to the West Bank and Gaza returned in August 1987 from a ten-day trip. The delegation was led by Leticia Peña, National Executive Committee member of the November 29th Committee for Palestine and head of the Committee's Latino Task Force. Already members of the delegation are scheduling public reportbacks around the country. More on the delegation later.

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Los Angeles was the location for the July 1987 national convention of the New Jewish Agenda (NJA), which supported the right of the Palestinian people to a state of their own, in addition to opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America and the arms race. Five hundred delegates and guests attended. We note that the NJA has recently come under attack for participating in joint work with groups such as the November 29th Committee for Palestine. An editorial in the *Northern California Jewish Bulletin*, for example, sharply criticized the NJA for a convention resolution which called for participation of the PLO and the Soviet Union in peace talks. The *Bulletin* describes NJA as "a haven for the progressive Jew who has had difficulty identifying with the more moderate stance of mainstream Judaism." As evidence of its own moderation, the *Bulletin* criticizes Agenda for having "attacked the Reagan administration's position on Central America, for example, going so far as to defend Nicaragua's Sandinista regime against anti-Semitic allegations." Further, "In 1982, Agenda was the first nationwide Jewish group to oppose Israel's incursion into Lebanon while most Jewish groups were defending Israel's actions." The conclusion is inescapable: We need many more Jewish groups to stand for peace and justice in the Middle East and around the world and shift "mainstream Judaism" from "moderation" to traditional Jewish values of freedom and justice. □

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*Palestine Focus* is the national newspaper of the November 29th Committee for Palestine. The newspaper is an activist vehicle tied to an activist movement, yet aimed at a general audience with little background knowledge. We report on activities, not only of our committee, but of other groups; and we provide consistent commentary and analysis of events in the Middle East.

The November 29th Committee for Palestine takes its name from the date declared by the United Nations as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Our task is to spark and support consistent, far-reaching, and effective activity which brings the issue of Palestine before the American people and builds a growing and deepening base of understanding. Our committee organizes to stop U.S. intervention in the Middle East and to cut off U.S. aid to Israel. We educate Americans on the need to support the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and to oppose Israeli policies of discrimination which deny the Palestinian people their rights.

Signed articles are not necessarily the opinion of the November 29th Committee for Palestine. Letters, opinions, and other contributions are welcome.

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## BALFOUR ...

Continued from page 1

Without doubt, the British Empire had good reasons to support the Zionist project. But the movement had its own interpretation of the declaration. Many Zionists were concerned that the call for "a national home for the Jewish people" did not precisely call for a "Jewish state," but Chaim Weizmann, chief Zionist negotiator with the British government, summed up the movement's understanding of the declaration: "It would mean exactly what we would make it mean—neither more nor less."

The Zionist movement had been searching for such a document as the Balfour Declaration since the 1890s: a "charter" from one of the great powers that would offer the appearance of legality along with the steel reality of military protection so that the colonization could proceed. Seeking just such a promise, Theodor Herzl had made pilgrimages to the thrones of King, Kaiser, Czar, and Sultan, offering the Zionist project as "a bulwark against barbarism." The British could have a bulwark around the Suez canal, a barricade against the aspirations of the Arab people just freed from the weight of centuries of Ottoman rule. The British also felt the Zionist movement could deflect the growing radicalization of the impoverished Eastern European Jewish communities. The grand

plan of the Zionist movement intersected with Britain's imperial design. In reality, the Zionists had no intention of protecting the rights of the native population and the British had no intention of seeing the Jewish "national home" become independent of British control.

### **The Balfour Declaration relegated Palestine to a future of Jewish minority rule over the Arab majority.**

Seventy years later the obvious still needs to be stated: An imperial power, Great Britain, seized control of the lands and destiny of the Palestinians, and it gave away the rights of the indigenous people to a settler movement whose goal was to displace them. The Zionist movement still points to the Balfour Declaration as a symbol of legitimacy; but the fact remains: Today, when millions have fought for their freedom—and won—against the inhumanity of colonialism, the Balfour Declaration is nothing but a sham, one more example of "the white man's burden" of arrogance and aggrandizement. Naturally enough, Lord Balfour, the architect of the British Mandate, also played a major role in creating the Union of South

Africa, the predecessor of today's apartheid state. South African leader Jan Smuts, good friend of Chaim Weizmann and a loyal servant of the British Empire, vigorously campaigned for the colonial charter. In effect, with a Jewish population of no more than 10 percent in 1917 Palestine, the Balfour Declaration relegated Palestine to a future of Jewish minority rule over the Arab majority.

Seventy years ago the Palestinian people were not consulted about the "charter" to take away their homeland, just as they are not consulted by the Israeli government in its current plans to continue the denial and displacement begun so long ago. By the time of the creation of the Israeli state in 1948, the Zionist movement would use force of arms to make the Balfour Declaration "mean exactly what we would make it mean." Despite cosmetic promises that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine," everything was done with just that end in mind—from forced expulsions to massacres, from exile in refugee camps to military occupation. And the process of defining the Palestinians by negatives begun by the Balfour Declaration ("non-Jewish communities") continued with the establishment of the Israeli state.

Seventy years later, the United States has taken Britain's place as imperial protector of Israel, and the Palestinians are still denied

their national and political rights, most notably their right to determine their own destiny. Seventy years later, neither Israel and the United States consider the representative of the Palestinian people, the PLO, as worthy to engage in "civilized" dialogue.

While the Balfour Declaration may be historical reality, like the British Mandate and Israel itself, it provides no moral justification to dispossess the Palestinian people. Racism and the denial of basic human and national rights cannot be made "legitimate." Today there is a new declaration proclaimed by people throughout the world: The Palestinian people still may not be consulted, but their voice will be heard.

In this Year of Palestine, when people mark 70 years since the Balfour Declaration, 40 years since the UN partition plan, 20 years of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and 5 years since the invasion of Lebanon, the world demands peace and justice for the Palestinians. The new declaration calls for an international peace conference with all parties to the conflict, including the PLO, and not just Israel and the United States: a peace conference that will guarantee the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people for self-determination and an independent state. □

## IRAN/IRAQ WAR ...

Continued from page 1

### **Israel's Role in the War**

Israel sees the war as weakening some of its opponents and diverting their attention, for example, from southern Lebanon. Israel's chief neighboring adversary, Syria, has alone backed Iran among Arab countries. One reason Israel, which views all Arabs as its enemy, supports Iran is the fact that Iran is not an Arab country.

Israel was a strong backer of the late Shah; in 1978 Israeli advisors counseled their Iranian colleagues to use massive military repression to crush the growing protests which drove the Shah from power. Israeli arms manufacturers supplied the Shah's army and continued to supply the army of the Islamic Republic. Thousands of jobs were at stake, and Israeli shipments resumed in 1980, even as American hostages were being held in Iran.

The Iranian army and air force had been entirely equipped with U.S.-supplied equipment. Supplies of spare parts and other items directly from the United States were completely cut off by the hostage crisis. Israel had the necessary access and expertise Iran needed. The outbreak of the war with Iraq only intensified Iran's desperation to obtain weapons at any cost.

### **Henry Kissinger commented about the Iran/Iraq war: "The ultimate American interest is that both sides should lose."**

The Israelis began by supplying spare tires for Iran's Phantom jets and went on to supply hundreds of tons of weapons ranging from recoilless rifles to artillery gun barrels and ammunition, antitank missiles and launchers, 45,000 Uzi submachineguns, howitzers, and spare parts for American-made tanks and F-4 and F-5 fighters. Indeed, Patrick Seale wrote in the *Observer* in 1985 that "Israel is Iran's most reliable arms supplier with a trade valued at between \$500 million and \$800 million a year." The Shah had purchased only an estimated \$225 million a year from Israel, but he was not at war and retained U.S. support.

The unfolding Iran-Israel-contra scandal has focused attention on Israeli sales of Hawk and TOW missiles to the Iranians. Unfortunately, the zeal of its congressional defenders to shield Israel from scrutiny has prevented much discussion of the implications for U.S. policy and its relationship with Israel.

### **The Iran/Iraq War and Consequences for Peace**

The principal result of the war is the hundreds of thousands of lives lost by combatants and civilians alike in Iran and Iraq. Neither regime can be credited with much concern for the democratic rights or the lives of their own citizens. Iraq launched the war in September 1980, but Iran now insists on continuing it until the downfall of the present Iraqi regime. Nor do humanistic considerations weigh heavily in Washington and Tel Aviv. Instead it is the spillover of the war into the shipping lanes of the region and its threat to U.S. allies, such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, that has begun to concern the United States.

Iran's long-standing claim on the island nation of Bahrain was renounced by the Shah but has been resurrected by the current government. And the recent turmoil at the annual pilgrimage to Mecca poses a troubling challenge to the Saudi royal family. In addition, leverage over oil flowing to Europe and Japan is an important element in U.S. considerations and also explains why its European allies are less than enthusiastic over increased U.S. intervention in the area.

But for those concerned for peace with justice throughout the Middle East, there are other significant consequences of the war. It is certain that Iraq's involvement in the war figured heavily in Israeli calculations in launching its 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Having sidelined Egypt with the 1979 Camp David accords, the Israeli government thought that Syria alone stood in its way.

Indeed the Iran/Iraq war has so divided Arab ranks that it has materially shifted the balance of power in the Middle East—which had already been heavily weighted toward Israel and the United States—further toward U.S. and Israeli control. Israel is always looking for openings through which it can subvert Arab unity; Iraq has moved steadily toward U.S. dependency, which was signified quite early by its endorsement of Egypt and the Camp David accords, a reversal of Iraq's previous stance. And, despite Iran's inflated rhetoric, the extreme chauvinism of the regime has left it open to manipulation by the Israelis through arms sales.

Israel, facing weakened adversaries, has grown more committed to maintenance of control over the West Bank and Gaza and to imposing "peace" on its Arab neighbors. Thus the war feeds Israeli intransigence toward the convening of a genuine international peace conference and Israeli determination to stamp out Palestinian resistance in the West Bank and Gaza.

Clearly, ending the Iran/Iraq war is the immediate challenge for peace in the Middle East. In addition, the ending of the Iran/Iraq war would be an important contribution toward a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian/Israel conflict. The Palestinian people need the active support of

both the Iranian and Iraqi peoples if Israel and the United States are eventually to be forced to the conference table.

The direct intervention of the United States which logically flows from a role escorting Kuwaiti ships does not promote an end to the Iran/Iraq war. The United Nations Security Council unanimously approved a resolution for a ceasefire to end the war in July. On paper, the United States, which introduced the proposal, favors a peaceful settlement. But on the high seas, the United States is moving toward war. U.S. intervention offers only the continuation of war.

**"Israel is Iran's most reliable arms supplier with a trade valued at between \$500 million and \$800 million a year."—Patrick Seale, Observer**

### **The Challenge to the Peace Movement**

The U.S. peace movement has been reluctant to take up the issue of the Iran/Iraq war as it has remained aloof from all issues concerning the Middle East, including the strong links between the contras and the Middle East. The scandal and the Washington hearings demonstrate that this region is high in priority for the U.S. government. As the scandal unfolds and as U.S. intervention escalates, now is the time to change the peace movement's stance.

It is vital for the peace movement to oppose the war and criticize the Iranian and Iraqi regimes without succumbing to the racism promoted by the media and the government. The peace movement belongs on the side of the peoples of the Middle East. We belong on the side of the Iranian and Iraqi people opposed to their own governments and to foreign intervention. We also belong on the side of the Palestinian and Lebanese people resisting Israeli expansion and occupation. We can call on our congressional representatives to support the Security Council's ceasefire proposal and to enforce the War Powers Act. And we can urge them to join the call to end the Iran/Iraq war and to vigorously oppose direct and indirect U.S. involvement which can only postpone the prospect of peace and increase the danger of widening the war. □



# Alive and Kicking

By Reuven Kaminer

*Reuven Kaminer is one of a growing group of Israelis who currently face imprisonment because they met with official representatives of the PLO. He made the following remarks to Palestine Focus in San Francisco while on a national speaking tour.*

The first thing to say about the peace movement is that it is alive and kicking. There is a constant quest to find the proper organizational forms and the most imaginative combination at any given moment that will make the movement more attractive and create a process where things will get moving, get people into action, and actually get more people onto the streets and doing a better and better job. There are inevitable ups and downs.

It would be very important to point out that while we are sitting here talking this one up, very intensive preparations are going on in Israel to hold a big national demonstration on Saturday, June 5 in Tel Aviv, and that will be a serious demonstration organized by a new committee to mark the 20th anniversary of the occupation.

That committee is important in two senses. One is that it has a political program for the solution of the conflict. It is not only the evils of the occupation, which are manifest and which are growing on a day-to-day basis, not only to protest the severe repression, the collective punishment, the administrative arrests and all that is going on, there is also posed an alternative policy for Israel that centers around two basic elements.

The first is an international peace conference—with the participation of all parties to the conflict and that, of course, includes the Palestinian Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. This demonstration will say clearly that an international peace conference without the PLO is as ridiculous as an international peace conference without Israel, untenable and certainly unable to do anything to move us onto the path of peace.

**America cannot be the arbiter of the status quo in the Middle East, and they cannot be the sole shaper of the new reality in the Middle East.**

The second thing is that this demonstration will have a clear perspective on the settlement of the conflict through the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel in the territories occupied by Israel in the June 1967 war twenty years ago. We are talking about peace without annexation. We are talking about peace without any territorial acquisition beyond the June 1967 border.

Now that is the main content of the demonstration against the occupation and a serious international initiative toward a just solution to the Palestinian question. In regards to the composition of the grouping, it is in many senses the people who built the Committee in Solidarity with Bir Zeit and the Committee Against the War in Lebanon. But there is a clarity in regard to political alternatives and the coming together of people on the basis of things that we have learned in working together in the past that augurs well for the possibility that this new committee would become a new, active force in the Israeli peace scene.

We do need a new formation. The other formations have contributed an awful lot and have served their role historically. The Committee for Solidarity with Bir Zeit University does occasionally get together for important activities. We had an activity about three weeks ago on a Saturday when 150 activists traveled to Ramallah and tried to get to Bir Zeit in a very good activity to protest the closure of Bir Zeit University.

We had a wonderful reception by our friends from Bir Zeit. We got as far as the Board of Governors in Ramallah, and we held a meeting there. It was a very stirring example of Palestinian-Israeli solidarity. Then we were eventually blocked on the road to Bir Zeit. After that meeting we tried to continue and the police blocked us. We were cooling it that day.

The same week Gush Emunim activists had bypassed some army roadblocks, and we did not want to give them the pleasure of balancing us off with Gush Emunim. It was a very effective activity, and the people who move



things in and around the Bir Zeit committee and now those in the committee to mark 20 years of occupation are alive and kicking and searching for the kind of formation and formula that will help us move on to a new plateau of activity.

### Peace Now

Peace Now, after a long hibernation which went through—it seems like more than one—winter, is trying to get its act together. They were thinking of doing something about the 20 years of occupation but did not actually work out where they were on that. They were against occupation, but they had some problems with that anniversary because they had never come out against the war.

As a matter of fact, many of them are firm believers that 1967 was a just war, in sharp opposition to the historical lesson, what we know *ex post facto* about the war. It was a war of aggression; it was a war of territorial expansion.

But what has activated them—they are moving onto the streets; there was an important demonstration right after our demonstration in Bir Zeit—is the Peres initiative. That is the kind of thing that they can work on, that they can get their teeth into; fissures in the establishment, pushing one establishment group in the direction of what they consider a peace alternative is what they are good about, and that was the center of their demonstration.

We know how cautious Peace Now is, how careful they are not to say anything that might land them on the outside of mainstream politics, but the settlers, the Gush Emunim, the chauvinist elements are so nervous and violent and hysterical that there was almost a clash in the Peace Now demonstration. They came out with slogans against the Peace Now demonstrations which are violent and assassnatory—if there is an adjective like that—in their nature, things like “Peace Now is the kapo of the Palestinians” and “the Peace Now is aiding and abetting the murder of our children.” They are talking up a very dangerous brew of hysterical chauvinism, and you hear this leitmotif more and more in the ranks of the settler and chauvinist, expansionist right that the Israeli peace people—or peace sentiment in Israel—is an organizer of the Palestinians. Otherwise the Palestinians would not know how to resist, would not know how to do anything. They would sit home and mourn their fate if it were not for these outside agitators—

various kinds, whether it is the people around the committee to mark the 20 years of occupation or Yossi Sarid or Peace Now. If it were not for these “outside agitators” who get the Palestinians all riled up and unhappy and get them to do things they should not be doing, the Palestinians would not be able to figure out the picture.

There are more and more elements in their propaganda against the peace forces, against the democratic forces. The day I arrived—May 22—they demonstrated outside Peres’ house with slogans that Peres was a traitor! This is Gush Emunim. They have an organization, the Organization for Judea and Samaria. That is a vicious group, an offshoot of Gush Emunim, even more vicious if that is possible. They have also been putting up lots of slogans that it is the Jewish leftists who are inciting and agitating the Palestinians, and they have to stop.

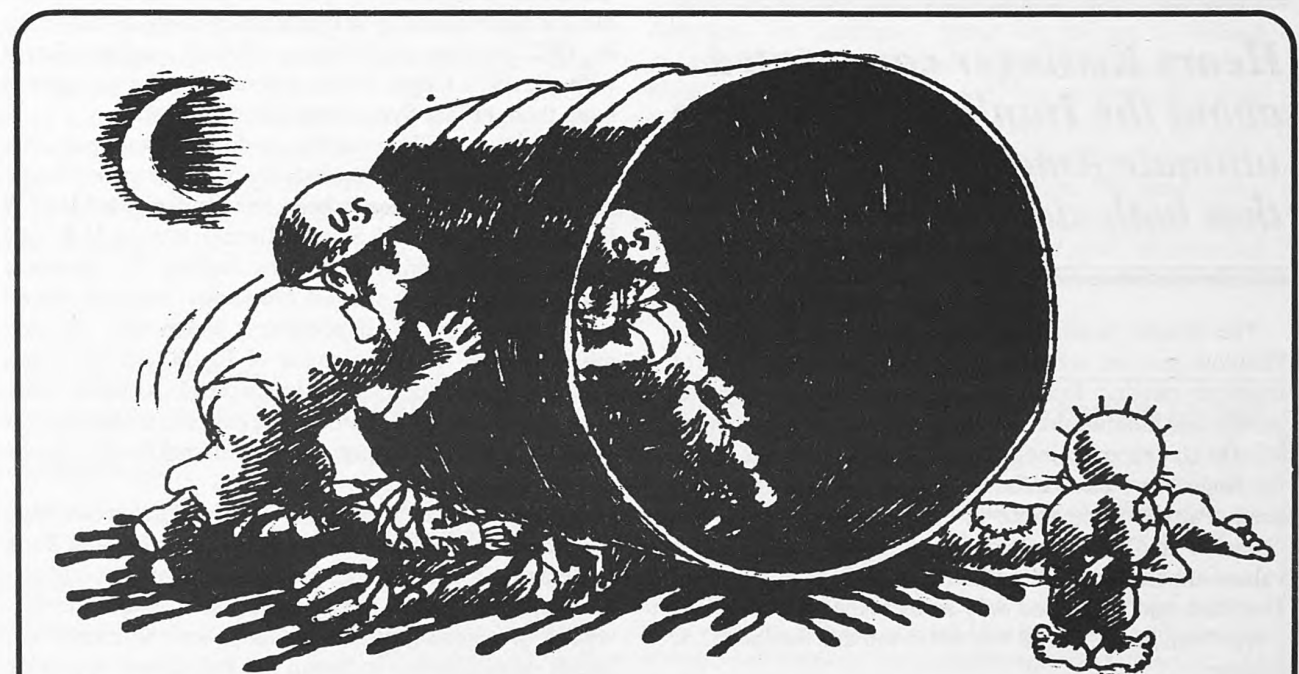
They start to froth at the mouth when there is any kind of talk of peace in the air, whether it is the Peres initiative or a real international peace conference which seems to loom on the horizon, any kind of talk from any quarter. They do not discriminate in this sense: the fascist right is ready to condemn all the Israeli peace camp, the more centrist “patriotic” elements, the more conservative, safe elements in the peace movement, and those of us who are more out on the left, more militant, more radical, and more consistent. They put us all in one bag as a bunch of traitors.

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I would say to the American peace movement that things are moving, things are not standing still. New international and regional realities, new developments in the Palestine liberation movement demand answers from the American peace movement. You have to get after the American government and move them into a stance of discourse and willingness. Americans got used to the idea of the “peace process”; that is *passé*.

It is not enough for some Murphy to scuttle around the Middle East and talk about a peace process which is nonexistent. America cannot be the arbiter of the status quo in the Middle East, and they cannot be the sole shaper of the new reality in the Middle East. America is going to have to learn how to negotiate. The United States will have to learn how to negotiate with the Soviet Union and with the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Those are political facts that the United States can ignore now only at a very heavy price. That heavy price would be increased tension in the Middle East. If the American people do not want to see the Middle East wander onto the agenda of hostility and war danger, then they are going to have to pressure the American government to get the Middle East on the agenda of international discussions and real diplomacy of a realistic kind. □



Al-Quds, June 18, 1987  
نجاجي الطلي - خلص بالقصص

Najji al-Ali, the Palestinian artist who drew the above cartoon satirizing the U.S. role in fueling the Gulf war, was shot in early August by an assassin in London and died August 29, 1987. Mr. al-Ali was one of the best known and most widely published political cartoonists in the Arab world. In a June 5, 1985 interview with Palestine Focus, he stated prophetically, “Throughout history there have been artists who wittingly or unwittingly were tools of a government or regime. Then there are the rare ones, artists who are willing to die for their ideas or positions.” Palestine Focus joins all those who mourn his death.