

Palestine Focus

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Editorial: Algiers and Madrid

The Long Road to Palestine

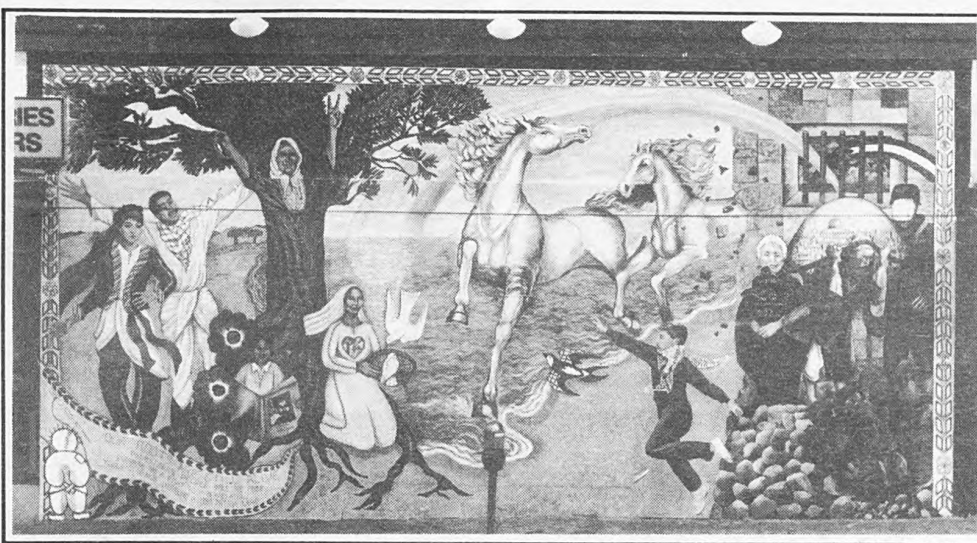
Palestinian delegates gathered in Algiers in late September for the first meeting of the Palestine National Council since the historic 1988 session which declared an independent Palestinian state and launched a dramatic peace initiative. But unlike 1988 when the euphoria of the year-old intifada had raised expectations of a breakthrough, the 1991 20th PNC presented Palestinian leaders with a bitter choice.

The Palestine National Council is the parliament of the nation of Palestine, of which the better-known Palestine Liberation Organization is the executive body. The council, formed in 1964, is the Palestinian body with highest authority over national matters and is made up of more than four hundred representatives from Palestinian communities around the world.

The new situation in which the U.S. government dominates the world without a major rival produced the Gulf war and the Bush/Baker "peace process." The Palestinian parliament in exile was asked to frame the terms for its participation in a peace conference to be called jointly by the United States and the Soviet Union, but that participation was tightly constrained.

Palestinian representatives were told by U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker they could attend only as part of a Jordanian delegation and that they cannot officially represent the PLO. Most importantly, the United States ruled out in advance any possibility of an independent Palestinian state.

The Israeli government demanded the right to walk out of the conference if it did not approve of any Palestinian delegates, whether because of their PLO ties or even if they live in East Jerusalem or in exile. The Shamir government also ruled out in advance any Israeli withdrawal from land occupied in 1967 or even a freeze in Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza.



New "Our Roots Are Still Alive" mural, the first about Palestine in the United States. Produced in San Francisco by the Break the Silence Mural Project, which is currently organizing a national speaking tour—510/540-0161 for information.

Marvin Collins

The most optimistic thing that can be said about the Middle East is that its future is cloudy

The PNC had to decide whether Palestinians should attend such a conference, whether it was worse to be there and confer legitimacy on the attack expected on Palestinian rights at the conference or worse to stay away and be blamed for the results. After a broad and democratic debate, the sentiment for participation with some conditions was overwhelming, with only a handful of delegates voting against. The unprecedented presence of two representatives from the West Bank, Faisal Husseini and Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi, strengthened the decision of the PNC. The predominant mood, despite the debate, was one of unity, for Palestinians know they have few other weapons in their arsenal more powerful than a common stance.

Madrid

The most optimistic thing that can be said about the future of the Middle East is that it is cloudy. The current process appears to offer no clear resolution to decades of injustice.

The Madrid peace conference was convened in October. Under the auspices of the United States and the Soviet Union (with a silent, note-taking United Nations representative), around a T-shaped table, representatives of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria listened as each read statements. Palestinians were represented by a fourteen-member delegation, which was formally combined with the Jordanian delegation but in actuality both distinct and separate, with its own

speech read by delegation leader Dr. Haider Abdul Shafi [see speech this issue]. Palestinians from Jerusalem and in the diaspora were represented in Madrid on an advisory team which coordinated closely with the official delegation.

Only the Palestinian delegation offered a flexible and principled view of how peace could be achieved. Nevertheless, Palestinian and Israeli negotiators were invited to Washington to negotiate something called an "autonomy plan." At presstime, the talks were beginning one week late because of Israeli footdragging.

Palestinians view such a plan as transitional, leading to an independent state. They believe that vital matters, such as land and water, must be under their control in the transitional period. Israel's position—apparently backed by the Bush administration—is that no Palestinian state should ever be created, and the Israeli government is not willing to give up control over land and water or even to stop building or expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

In the West Bank and Gaza, the appearance of articulate and pragmatic Palestinian representatives on the world diplomatic stage led to festive celebrations and use of olive branches in place of stones. There is, however, also significant opposition to Palestinian participation in the U.S.-dominated talks.

Supporters of Palestinian rights are in a similar position. On the one hand, we want to mobilize as much pressure on behalf of the Palestinian negotiators as we can. We continue to insist that the U.S. government stop funding occupation and intransigence with our tax dollars. The Bush administration must drop the pretence that it is an unbiased arbiter. At the same time, we do not expect the negotiating process to be smooth or brief. There is no guarantee that Palestinians will gain anything material from their participation. □

\$10 Billion: 120-Day Window of Opportunity

By Jeanne Butterfield

Israel's request for \$10 billion in housing-loan guarantees for the "absorption" of Soviet Jewish immigrants has touched off a political debate in the United States that has finally begun to reveal the potential limits of U.S. aid to Israeli occupation. The debate makes clear that the issue of U.S. aid must be firmly linked to Israel's continuing refusal to negotiate "land for peace" and its ability to complete the de facto annexation of the West Bank and Gaza. Strengthening this linkage can provide the leverage with which the United States can insist that Israel freeze the settlements, end the occupation, and negotiate terms for a just and lasting peace with the Palestinian people.

The Debate Begins with Linkage

In early September, the Israeli government presented its request for \$10 billion in housing-loan guarantees over the next five years. Preliminary indications were that the request would sail through Congress. But

the Bush administration had other concerns. The "peace process" that Bush and Baker had been working so hard to launch in the wake of the Gulf war seemed precarious. On September 6, Bush asked Congress to delay action on the Israeli request for 120 days in order to "give peace a chance." While Bush claimed he was not "linking" the loans to any freeze in Israeli settlements, Secretary of State James Baker had himself told Congress in the spring that Israeli settlements represented the biggest obstacle to peace.

The press quickly took up the linkage theme; the *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times*, and *Washington Post* carried lead editorials supporting Bush's request for a delay and maintaining that the Israeli government's settlement policy was indeed at the heart of the loan-guarantee debate. "This policy directly compromises both the atmosphere of the [peace] conference and the geographic possibility for trading land for peace." (*New York Times*, 9-17-91) An ABC News poll in mid-September reported an astounding 85 percent support for the president's position. In late September,

Congress was forced to accept Bush's request for a delay and indicated that it would deal with the loan-guarantee request when it reconvened in January.

The press continued to write about the nature and extent of U.S. aid to Israel. Bush himself, defending his request for a delay, told his September 12 press conference, "during the current fiscal year alone, and despite our own economic problems, the

United States provided Israel with more than \$4 billion in economic and military aid, nearly \$1,000 for every Israeli man, woman, and child, as well as with \$400 million in loan guarantees to facilitate immigrant absorption." Several newspapers ran extensive articles documenting the extraordinary extent and nature of U.S. aid to Israel over the years. ("U.S. Aid to Israel: \$77 Billion since '67," *New York Times*, 9-9-91)

Continued on page 5

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Loan Guarantees to Israel Immoral and Unnecessary

By Steve Goldfield

Many supporters of Israel contend that it is immoral to link the \$10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel to the peace process, Israeli settlement policies, or other issues. But the real immorality is to pretend that such issues are not linked.

There are two fundamental immoralities in approving the loan guarantees. First, it is both immoral and illegal—both under U.S. law and international law in the form of the 1949 Geneva conventions—to in any way facilitate the growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, including in East Jerusalem. Given the fungibility of aid or loan funds (which simply means that cash, once it goes into the treasury, cannot be traced from source to eventual use), in which these funds free other funds in the Israeli budget to build settlements, there is no moral way to aid Israel with grants or loans so long as the Israeli government is expanding settlements. It is to the credit of the Bush administration that it appears to have come to such a position, whatever its motives.

Al Fajr (Jerusalem) reports that between January 1990 and July 1991 approximately 310,000 Jewish immigrants arrived in Israel; 88 percent came from the Soviet Union. At least 4,000 of the new immigrants settled in the West Bank and Gaza, not including East Jerusalem, since January 1990. The Jerusalem municipality reported that 7,000 Soviet immigrants had settled in East Jerusalem in 1990. A conservative estimate is that at least 16,000 more new immigrants have settled in East Jerusalem since January 1990.

But there is a second immorality which is rarely discussed. Soviet Jews are not freely choosing to emigrate to Israel. All surveys of their views show that they would much prefer to emigrate to the

United States or Western Europe, even Germany, than to go to Israel. The abysmal Israeli economy, which offers only unemployment and homelessness to most Soviet Jews, only exacerbates the reluctance to go to Israel.

But Israel and its supporters have worked hard to remove any freedom of choice from the Soviet emigrants. Israeli officials insisted on direct flights from the Soviet Union to Israel because so many Soviet Jews refuse to continue on to Israel from intermediate stops. As soon as most restrictions on Soviet Jewish emigration were lifted by the Soviet Union, the U.S. government, with strong support from the Israel lobby, slashed immigration quotas.

Israel also makes it very difficult for Soviet Jews to leave once they have arrived in Israel. Before they are issued Israeli passports, immigrants are required to "reimburse" the Israeli government for all its absorption expenses, even those it would have incurred had they stayed for the full duration of the absorption process. And when a small number of Soviet Jews managed to get from Israel to Germany on their own, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy flew to Germany to demand their deportation to Israel. They were deported.

Israel and its supporters have worked hard to remove any freedom of choice from Soviet emigrants.

If it is immoral to prevent Jews from leaving the Soviet Union, it is equally immoral to force them to go to Israel and prevent them from leaving. Instead of guaranteeing \$10 billion in loans to Israel to build settlement infrastructure such as



Residents of a new Jewish settlement in Gaza.

Arad/SIPA/Washington Report on Middle East Affairs

roads, the only moral course is to advocate that Soviet Jews be permitted to choose where they go. In a few weeks the U.S. Congress will make its decision on the loan guarantees. The moral landscape will not have significantly changed in 120 days.

There are also two practical objections to the loan guarantees. Studies by the Export-Import Bank (a U.S. government

agency) and the Congressional Research Service ("Israel's Growing Debt Burden," Jim McGee, *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, October 13, 1991) show that the Israeli economy cannot hope to repay additional loans of such a magnitude except with foreign aid. Therefore, the selling of the loan guarantees as a risk-free way to supply Israel without funds from the U.S. treasury is a scam.

Second, Israel does not even need the loans to finance genuine absorption. Sever Plotzker, economics editor of the Israeli daily *Yediot Aharonot*, wrote on September 13, 1991 that the Israeli government has substantial reserves available, such as \$7 billion in foreign currency derived from aid after the Gulf war and funds brought by Soviet immigrants. And since the number of Soviet immigrants arriving is about half of the number budgeted for in 1991, there should be a surplus for next year. ("Israel's \$10 billion loan guarantee: is it needed?" Elfi Pallis, *Middle East International*, 11 October 1991)

In these circumstances, it would be fiscally irresponsible and morally reprehensible for Congress to approve the \$10 billion loan guarantees. Unfortunately, the U.S. Congress has demonstrated no strong impulse for fiscal responsibility or moral courage. □

Linking Housing Loan Guarantees and Israeli Settlements: A Consensus is Emerging

In September, as the national debate about further aid to Israeli occupation heated up in the form of \$10 billion in housing-loan guarantees, many organizations heretofore silent about the issue of aid began to speak up. Positions varied, and organizations were motivated by a variety of concerns. Yet what emerged was a broad public consensus opposed to the loan guarantees so long as Israel continues to expand its illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and refuses to come to the negotiating table under a "land for peace" formula.

The Israeli Peace Movement is Divided

The most progressive sector of the Israeli peace movement weighed in early in the debate. In a June interview, Michel Warschavsky, founder and director of the Alternative Information Center in Jerusalem, stated, "We need to make the American people understand that by providing material support to Israel, they are not only harming the Palestinians—they are harming themselves and prospects for any kind of meaningful peace in this world."

In an open letter circulated to Congress in late July, several leading Israeli academics and activists, including Matti Peled, Yossi Amitay, Adam Keller, Yael Lottan, and Ruhama Marton told Congress that humanitarian aid to new immigrants should not be turned against the principle of land for peace. The letter concluded: "The loan guarantees requested by Israel should therefore be made conditional upon the Israeli government's acceptance of that principle ... manifested by an immediate cessation of

all settlement activities."

Peace Now, on the other hand, refused to link the loan issue to that of settlements. While Peace Now continues to oppose Israeli settlement policy, U.S. Peace Now spokesperson Gail Pressberg stated, "It needs to be negotiated as an incentive policy, not a stick. The bottom line is Israel gets the aid even if it's recalcitrant, because ... we have to be concerned with the welfare of the new *olim* [immigrants] as well as

States have largely echoed the stand taken by Warschavsky, Peled, and the other signers of the open letter. The International Jewish Peace Union has long opposed aid for occupation and opposes the loan guarantees. New Jewish Agenda asked Congress "to make all housing-loan guarantees to Israel contingent on Israel placing a permanent freeze on building or expanding settlements in the occupied territories." The American Council for Israeli/Palestinian

Church in America voted "to urge U.S. economic pressure on Israel to stop Jewish settlements in Arab territories it occupies" and opposed further U.S. housing-loan guarantees unless Israel stops expanding settlements. The United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. already have resolutions on record opposing settlements and calling for a cessation of U.S. support for them.

Washington, D.C. offices and networks and local task forces of these four denominations joined with several Arab-American and peace organizations to hold a Call on Congress on September 25 to oppose the housing-loan guarantees. The call stated, "We oppose the proposed \$10 billion Israeli loan guarantees while peace negotiations have yet to take place and until Israel agrees to end all new construction or expansion of existing settlements in the occupied territories."

A Rainbow of Opposition from the NGOs

On September 12, the day that AIPAC lobbyists descended on Capitol Hill to promote the loan guarantees, fifty NGOs and associated individuals placed an ad in the *Washington Post*. The signers included former Congressman George Crockett, Ray Davis of the D.C. Student Coalition against Apartheid and Racism, the National Jobs with Peace Campaign, the National Mobilization for Survival, Clergy and Laity Concerned, the Washington Peace Center, Women's Strike for Peace, the Unitarian Universalist Association, along with PSC and other Middle East, Jewish, Palestinian, and Arab-American organizations and individuals. The ad concluded: "We oppose these loan guarantees that would perpetuate illegal settlement activity, impede substantive peace negotiations, and facilitate the *de facto* annexation of occupied Arab territories." □

FOCUS ON ACTION

By Jeanne Butterfield

the territories." (*Washington Jewish Week*, 9-5-91).

Yossi Sarid, a member of the Israeli Knesset from the Citizen's Rights Party, was more blunt: "In practice, the American government funded the policy of occupation with huge sums given to both Labor and Likud governments [over the past 24 years of occupation]. Without outside sources of funding, the settlements in the territories could not have been built.... The United States has regained its voice ... with the observation that the peace process and the settlement process are connected by their diametrically opposed effects: If the settlements continue, there will not be peace; and if there is peace, there will not be settlements. Peace talks cannot progress as long as new settlements are being established or existing settlements enlarged."

Jewish Peace Groups in U.S. Speak Out

The Jewish peace groups in the United

States have largely echoed the stand taken by Warschavsky, Peled, and the other signers of the open letter. The International Jewish Peace Union has long opposed aid for occupation and opposes the loan guarantees. New Jewish Agenda asked Congress "to make all housing-loan guarantees to Israel contingent on Israel placing a permanent freeze on building or expanding settlements in the occupied territories." The American Council for Israeli/Palestinian

The Churches Take a Strong Stand

Peace released and circulated the Israeli open letter. And Jerome Segal of the Jewish Peace Lobby wrote in the *Washington Post*, "On the moral level, it is time to say 'Enough.' ... The Likud government's quest for 'Greater Israel' is being pursued not through annexation or negotiations, but through a relentless settlement policy. The hapless Soviet Jews are being used as a demographic battering ram in this pursuit. And American aid is being called upon to facilitate it."

U.S. churches took a strong stand against Israeli settlement policy, and many opposed the loan guarantees and other aid to occupation. In its July convention, the Episcopal Church passed a resolution advocating that "whatever Israel spends on settlements in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip be held in escrow from U.S. aid to Israel." The Evangelical Lutheran

Four Years of the Intifada

By Sharon Rose

At the approach of the December 9th fourth anniversary of the beginning of the intifada, olive branches have become as symbolic of the uprising as stones. The occupation is still challenged on a daily basis and the Israelis still mete out their brutal retaliation and collective punishment; the emergent Palestinian political and economic infrastructure still functions. But at this juncture—after the Madrid conference and prior to the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations that are projected to begin before year's end—the intifada's main energies are absorbed in the process of reevaluation begun at the end of the Gulf war, and in the day-to-day struggles to survive and to overcome the war's disastrous immediate consequences.

Small groups continue to confront Israeli troops throughout the country, but large street demonstrations are rare. Jerusalem remains closed to all but a few Palestinians, and tensions run high as land confiscations and construction of settlements continue to accelerate.

At the same time, the army has assumed a lower profile in the occupied territories, all schools except Bir Zeit University have been permitted to reopen and authorities have indicated they intend to lift some restrictions on economic development soon. Israeli government spokesmen and their supporters seize every opportunity to portray the intifada as broken and to herald a return to their version of "normalcy" in the West Bank and Gaza. But few observers believe it is likely, or even possible, for the intifada to end while Palestinian national aspirations remain unmet. In assessing the uprising's four years, we must look at how far the Palestinians have come and at what cost, as well as how far they have yet to go.

A Powerful Equation

On the eve of the Madrid conference some Israeli and western politicians floated various peace proposals that were all strikingly similar. In its essence, the formula appeared to be: in exchange for the Palestinians ending the intifada, and Arab countries ending their boycott, Israel might be convinced to freeze settlements and some kind of partial autonomy might be obtained in the West Bank and Gaza. There is an equation here: the power of the intifada plus the economic weight of Arab countries equals the power of the occupation.

But achieving that kind of equal status has been costly. Since the beginning of the uprising more than 1000 people have been killed, more than 115,000 injured, and 69 people have been expelled from the country. Presently 15,000 people are imprisoned, many under indeterminate sentences; the total number who have been imprisoned during the uprising is much greater. Close to 115,000 trees have been uprooted, and 400,000 dunums (100,000 acres) of land seized. Almost 2000 houses and other structures have been demolished or sealed. All told, more than 65 percent of occupied Palestinian land has been confiscated since 1967, 7.3 percent since 1990.

The Real Toll

And numbers tell only part of the story; the real story is in the lives of the 2 million people who after twenty years of invisibility, found a way to force the world to see them—a way to break the image of Israel as innocent victim surrounded by hostile enemies, a way to pressure King Hussein to give up Jordanian claims to the West Bank, a way to build and sustain an indigenous clandestine leadership despite massive repression—and in so doing, a way to give the Palestine National Council the impetus to declare independence for a state in the West Bank and Gaza, relinquishing claims to all of historic Palestine and declaring its intention to live in peace with



"Intifada activists" from Palestine: a photographic journey, the new book by George Baramki Azar, touring the United States.

University of California Press, 1991.

Israel. Soon after the Declaration of Independence on November 15, 1988, the United States initiated a process of diplomatic dialogue with the PLO. This was a clear victory for the intifada and a tacit acknowledgement by the U.S. government of what the Palestinians had been saying all along—that no peace process could succeed without the PLO. In 1990, the United States found a pretext to break off the official dialogue, but that tacit acknowledgement survives in the form of Baker's ongoing discussions with representatives from the occupied territories and an indirect relationship with the PLO.

Broken Bones

The brutality of the Israeli response to the uprising was not unexpected in Palestine—nonetheless beatings and arrests of small children shocked the world. The Israelis apparently had failed to learn the lesson taught to other invaders by occupied populations—repression engenders stronger resistance. When the army deliberately and systematically broke the bones of unarmed people, the street demonstrations became larger and more determined. The Israeli authorities said the merchants participating in half day general strikes would be unwilling to sustain the long-term loss of income. Some shop owners were forced by the Israelis to shut down indefinitely, but the strikes became an institution, one of the clearest manifestations of the breadth of support for the intifada throughout all strata of society. Business people were also among the initiating leadership of widespread revolts against paying Israeli taxes. The authorities repeatedly claimed they had the names of all the high level leaders of the intifada and had jailed most of them. But all the while the Unified National Leadership appeared to be gaining stature and authority among the population, which continued to heed its calls to action in overwhelming numbers. The Israelis closed all the schools on the pretext that they had been used as organizing centers for the intifada; people organized clandestine schools.

Social Change

The Palestinian community quickly realized that a massive effort to build self-reliance and autonomy was needed in order to sustain the intifada. Cooperative efforts to produce basic commodities were initiated and many women became active outside their homes for the first time. The inevitable and healthy debate about what kind of new society people wanted to build exposed the contradiction between secular and Islamic views on the question. In Gaza, a campaign was begun by the Moslem Broth-

erhood (Hamas) to force women to wear head covering (a practice that was not traditional in Palestine except in isolated areas). Only after several violent confrontations did the Unified National Leadership proclaim women's right to choose without harassment. Observers see this episode as underscoring both a major weakness of the intifada, as well as a gain in that the issue of equality for women was widely debated for the first time.

In Israel

In Israel the cost of fighting the intifada further weakened the already precarious economy. As few could continue to ignore the occupation, the society further polarized over the question of land for peace. Over the last four years, repeated polls have shown willingness on the part of the majority to give up the West Bank and Gaza in exchange for a peace settlement. For Israel's political center, occupation of a population they believed to be essentially pacified was one thing, an occupying army killing children quite another. Many have agonized publicly over what they see as a moral breakdown of society. They point out that suicides soared during the first years of the intifada among young army recruits who could not reconcile the idea of defending their nation with the reality of being ordered to attack unarmed civilians. Some also point to data that show a great increase in domestic violence against Israeli women as stemming from endless war against the Palestinians. In the United States as well, after two years of the intifada, the first signs of public disaffection with Israeli policy began to be seen in the polls.

Worldwide Support

The Israeli attempt to wipe out the intifada with brute force, together with the Palestinian declaration of independence, also brought an outpouring of sympathy and support from around the world, but especially from western Europe. Throughout most of the intifada's first three years, delegations from the highest official diplomatic levels to private organizations and individuals arrived to tour the occupied territories and report back to their constituents. International bodies of trade unionists, health workers, journalists, educators, and churches all sent fact-finding missions and issued reports condemning the occupation and supporting Palestinian self-determination. Amnesty International issued the first of several reports critical of Israeli human rights abuses. Perhaps the high point of international support was symbolized by the 1989 Christmas week visit of South African Archbishop Desmond

Tutu, who met with Palestinian leaders, expressed support for statehood, and criticized Israeli policy. That same week a 30,000-strong demonstration of Israelis, Palestinians and international representatives formed a human chain around the walls of the old city of Jerusalem. The ebullient crowd marched under the slogan "1990: Time for Peace."

Around that time, the Israeli government began to change its tactics. The army appeared to be trying to keep a lower profile in the occupied territories, the access of journalists and foreign visitors was greatly curtailed, and the authorities held out the carrot of possibly reopening the schools on the condition that they not be used as places to organize protests. There was much talk about a so-called peace process that would involve Israeli-supervised local elections.

At the same time, some felt that the intifada was running out of steam, though all signs seemed to indicate that the leadership was working to strengthen the new collective institutions (schools, food and clothing cooperatives, and other social service organizations) and girding for another fight. The validity of these assessments was never tested; instead the events that led to the Gulf war changed everything.

War in the Gulf

With the invasion and occupation of Kuwait, the UN embargo, and finally, the war and its aftermath, the people of the West Bank and Gaza lost their largest single source of funds—remittances from the 400,000 Palestinians living and working there. Instead, at least 300,000 more Palestinian refugees were created, as the reinstated Kuwaiti government took revenge on almost all noncitizens, but especially the Palestinians who allegedly supported Saddam Hussein. The PLO and the Unified National Leadership of the intifada had not supported the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, but their crime was not to have supported the U.S.-led coalition that went to war.

The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza endured the 40-day curfew, attacks from Scud missiles, threats of mass expulsions, and actual mass arrests imposed by Israel and emerged to the news that the majority who had held jobs inside Israel no longer could travel there.

The Present Situation

Despite the popular character of the intifada and the ability to train young people to take up the work of those who have been jailed, the truth is that massive administrative detention has cost the intifada dearly—the best leaders remain behind barbed wire. The near collapse of their economy means that most people's energies go toward fundamental survival. Continued Israeli confiscation of land, the influx of Jewish settlers and the U.S. cooptation of most Arab governments have combined to further demoralize the population. Most Palestinians believe that success will be achieved in the current peace process only by gaining a commitment from Israel to end its occupation of Palestine. Despite widely publicized debates among different factions, the majority appears to have supported the PLO decision to attend the meeting and whatever ongoing talks may result.

Naseer Aruri told *Palestine Focus*, "This is the most difficult global situation the Palestinians have had to operate in since 1948 and perhaps even before." But facts are stubborn things. The fact is that occupation engenders resistance. Whether the olive branch can permanently replace the stone, whether the present state of the intifada is a prelude to a process that can lead to a real solution or is just a lull before another storm, depends not on the oppressive conditions of the moment, but on whether the world will recognize at long last, a nation's demand for self-determination. □

"Invisible Palestinians"

By Haidar Abdel-Shafi

Once again, Christian, Muslim and Jew face the challenge of heralding a new era enshrined in global values of democracy, human rights, freedom, justice, and security. From Madrid, we launch this quest for peace, a quest to place the sanctity of human life at the center of our world and to redirect our energies and resources from the pursuit of mutual destruction to the pursuit of joint prosperity, progress, and happiness.

We, the people of Palestine, stand before you in the fullness of our pain, our pride, and our anticipation, for we have long harbored a yearning for peace and a dream of justice and freedom. For too long, the Palestinian people have gone unheard, silenced and denied—our identity negated by political expediency, our rightful struggle against injustice maligned, and our present existence subsumed by the past tragedy of another people.

For the greater part of this century, we have been victimized by the myth of a land without the people and described with impunity as "the invisible Palestinians." Before such willful blindness, we refused to disappear or to accept a distorted identity. Our intifada is a testimony to our perseverance and resilience, waged in a just struggle to regain our rights.

It is time for us to narrate our own story, to stand witness as advocates of a truth which has long lain buried in the consciousness and conscience of the world. We do not stand before you as supplicants, but rather as the torchbearers who know that in our world of today, ignorance can never be an excuse. We seek neither an admission of guilt after the fact, nor vengeance for past inequities, but rather an act of will that would make a just peace a reality. We speak out from the full conviction of the rightness of our cause, the verity of our history, and the depth of our commitment. Therein lies the strength of the Palestinian people today, for we have scaled the walls of fear and reticence and we wish to speak out with the courage and integrity that our narrative and history deserve.

The cosponsors have invited us here today to present our case and to reach out to "the other" with whom we have had to face a mutually exclusive reality on the land of Palestine. But even in the invitation to this peace conference, our narrative was distorted and our truth only partially acknowledged. The Palestinian people are one, fused by centuries of history in Palestine, bound together by a collective memory of shared sorrows and joys and sharing a unity of purpose and vision. Our songs and ballads, our folktales and children's stories, the dialect of our jokes, the images of our poems, that hint of melancholy which colors even our happiest moments, are as important to us as the blood ties which link our families and clans.

Yet an invitation to discuss peace, the peace we all desire and need, comes to only a portion of our people. It ignores our national, historical, and organic unity. We come here wrenched from our sisters and brothers in exile to stand before you as the Palestinians under occupation, although we maintain that each of us represents the rights and interests of the whole.

We have been denied the right to publicly acknowledge our loyalty to our leadership and system of government, but allegiance and loyalty cannot be censored or severed. Our acknowledged leadership is more than just the democratically chosen leadership of all the Palestinian people; it is the symbol of our national identity and unity, the guardian of our past, the protec-

tor of our present, and the hope of our future. Our people have chosen to entrust it with their history and the preservation of our precious legacy. This leadership has been clearly and unequivocally recognized by the community of nations, with only a few exceptions who had chosen, for so many years, shadow over substance.

Regardless of the nature and conditions of our oppression, whether the dispossession and dispersion of exile or the brutality and repression of the occupation, the Palestinian people cannot be torn asunder. They remain united, a nation wherever they are or are forced to be.

Jerusalem, that city which is not only the soul of Palestine but the cradle of three world religions, is tangible even in its claimed absence from our midst at this stage. Its apparent, though artificial, exclusion from this conference is a denial of its right to seek peace and redemption, for it too has suffered from war and occupation. Jerusalem, the city of peace, has been barred from a peace conference and deprived of its calling. Palestinian Jerusalem, the capital of our homeland and future state, defines Palestinian existence—past, present, and future—but itself has been denied a voice and an identity. Jerusalem defies exclusive possessiveness or bondage. Israel's annexation of Jerusalem remains both clearly illegal in the eyes of the world community and an affront to the peace that this city deserves.

We come to you from a tortured land and a proud, though captive, people, having been asked to negotiate with our occupiers, but leaving behind the children of the intifada and a people under occupation and under curfew, who enjoined us not to surrender or forget. As we speak, thousands of our brothers and sisters are languishing in

of all, who can explain to those whose lands are confiscated and clear waters stolen, the message of peace? Remove the barbed wire, restore the land and its life-giving water.

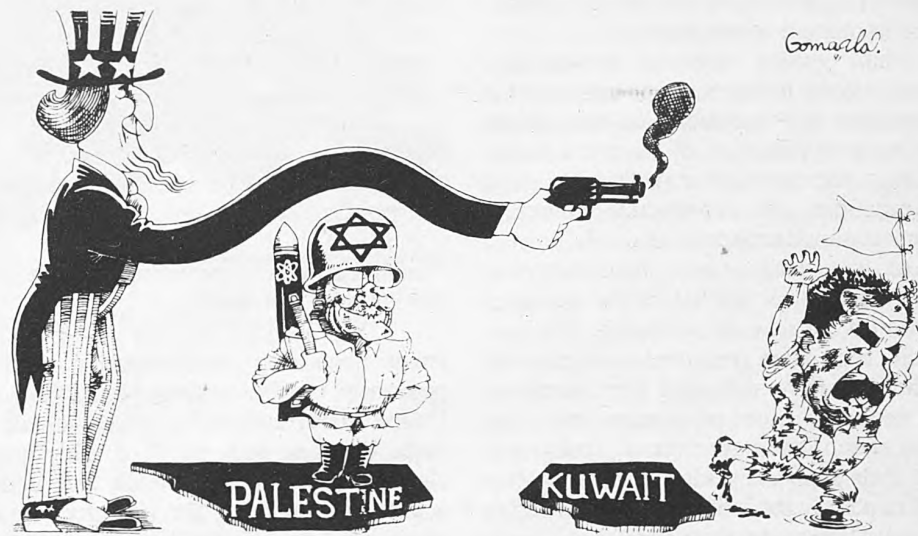
The settlements must stop now. Peace cannot be waged while Palestinian land is confiscated in myriad ways and the status of the occupied territories is being decided each day by Israeli bulldozers and barbed wire. This is not simply a position; it is an irrefutable reality. Territory for peace is a travesty when territory for illegal settlement is official Israeli policy and practice. The settlements must stop now.

In the name of the Palestinian people, we wish to directly address the Israeli peo-

or crying out in pain as the clubs descended on both Palestinian and Israeli alike. For pain knows no national boundaries, and no one can claim a monopoly on suffering.

We once formed a human chain around Jerusalem, joining hands and calling for peace. Let us today form a moral chain around Madrid and continue that noble effort for peace and the promise of freedom for our sons and daughters. Break through the barriers of mistrust and manipulated fears. Let us look forward in magnanimity and in hope.

To our Arab brothers and sisters, most of whom are represented here in this historic occasion, we express our loyalty and gratitude for their lifelong support and soli-



ple with whom we have had a prolonged exchange of pain: let us share hope instead. We are willing to live side-by-side on the land and the promise of the future. Sharing, however, requires two partners willing to

share. We are here together seeking a just and lasting peace whose cornerstone is freedom for Palestine, justice for the Palestinians, and an end to the occupation of all Palestinian and Arab lands. Only then can we really enjoy together the fruits of peace: prosperity, security, and human dignity and freedom.

In particular, we address our Jordanian colleagues in our joint delegation. Our two peoples have a very special historic and geographic relationship. Together, we shall strive to achieve peace. We will continue to strive for our sovereignty, while proceeding freely and willing to prepare the grounds for a confederation between the two states of Palestine and Jordan, which can be a cornerstone for our security and prosperity.

To the community of nations on our fragile planet, to the nations of Africa and Asia, to the Muslim world, and particularly to Europe, on whose southern and neighboring shores we meet today: From the heart of our collective struggle for peace, we greet you and acknowledge your support and recognition. You have recognized our rights and our government and have given us real support and protection. You have penetrated the distorting mist of racism, stereotyping, and ignorance and committed the act of seeing the "invisible" and listening to the voice of the silenced. The Palestinians, under occupation and in exile, have become a reality in your eyes and, with courage and determination, you have affirmed the truth of our narrative. You have taken up our cause and our case, and we have brought you into our hearts. We thank you for caring and daring to know the truth—the truth which must set us all free.

To the cosponsors and participants in this occasion of awe and challenge, we pledge our commitment to the principle of justice, peace, and reconciliation and uniform standards. We shall persist, in our quest for peace, to play before you the substance and determination of our people, often victimized but never defeated. We shall pursue our people's right to self-determination, to the exhilaration of freedom, and to the warmth of the sun as a nation among equals.

This is the moment of truth; you must have the courage to recognize it and the

"My homeland is not a suitcase, and I am no traveler."

—Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish

Israeli prisons and detention camps, most detained without evidence, charge, or trial, many cruelly mistreated and tortured in interrogation, guilty only of seeking freedom or daring to defy the occupation. We speak in their name and we say: "Set them free."

As we speak, the tens of thousands who have been wounded or permanently disabled are in pain: let peace heal their wounds. As we speak, the eyes of thousands of Palestinian refugees, deportees, and displaced persons since 1967 are haunting us, for exile is a cruel fate: bring them home. They have the right to return. As we speak, the silence of demolished homes echoes through the halls and in our minds: we must rebuild our homes in our free state.

And what do we tell the loved ones of those killed by army bullets? How do we answer the questions and the fear in our children's eyes? For one out of three Palestinian children under occupation has been killed, injured, or detained in the past four years. How can we explain to our children that they are denied education, our schools so often closed by army fiat? Or why their life is in danger for raising a flag in a land where even children are killed or jailed? What requiem can be sung for trees uprooted by army bulldozers? And, most

share as equals. Mutuality and reciprocity must replace domination and hostility for genuine reconciliation and coexistence under international legality. Your security and ours are mutually dependent, as entwined as the fears and nightmares of our children.

We have seen some of you at your best and at your worst, for the occupier can hide no secrets from the occupied, and we are witness to the toll that occupation has exacted from you and yours. We have seen you anguish over the transformation of your sons and daughters into instruments of a blind and violent occupation, and we are sure that at no time did you envisage such a role for the children whom you thought would forge your future. We have seen you look back in deepest sorrow at the tragedy of your past and look on in horror at the disfigurement of the victim turned oppressor. Not for this have you nurtured your hopes, dreams, and your offspring.

This is why we have responded with solemn appreciation to those of you who came to offer consolation to our bereaved, to give support to those whose homes were being demolished, and to extend encouragement and counsel to those detained behind barbed wire and iron bars. And we have marched together, often choking together at the nondiscriminatory tear gas

Palestine Focus prints this speech—which profoundly moved an international audience—in its entirety because of its historic significance and its eloquence. It was delivered in Madrid in October 1991.

s" Speak to the World

will to implement it for our truth can no longer be hidden away in the dark recesses of inadvertency or neglect. The people of Palestine look at you with a straightforward, direct gaze, seeking to touch your heart, for you have dared to stir up hopes that cannot be abandoned. You cannot afford to let us down, for we have lived up to the values you espouse, and we have remained true to our cause.

We, the Palestinian people, made the imaginative leap in the Palestine National Council of November 1988, during which the Palestine Liberation Organization launched its peace initiative based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and declared Palestinian independence based on Resolution 181 of the United Nations, which gave birth to two states in 1948: Israel and Palestine.

In December 1988, a historic speech before the United Nations in Geneva led directly to the launching of the Palestinian-American dialogue. Ever since then, our people have responded positively to every serious peace initiative and has done its utmost to ensure the success of this process. Israel, on the other hand, has placed many obstacles and barriers in the path of peace to negate the very validity of the process. Its illegal and frenzied settlement activity is the most glaring evidence of its rejectionism, the latest settlement being erected just two days ago.

These historic decisions of the Palestine National Council wrenched the course of history from inevitable confrontation and conflict toward peace and mutual recognition. With our own hands and in an act of

of other people's "no." We must have reciprocity. We must have peace

In the Middle East there is no superfluous people outside time and place, but rather a state sorely missed by time and place—the state of Palestine. It must be born on the land of Palestine to redeem the injustice of the destruction of its historical reality and to free the people of Palestine from the shackles of their victimization. Our homeland has never ceased to exist in our minds and hearts, but it has to exist as a state on all the territories occupied by Israel in the war of 1967, with Arab Jerusalem as its capital in the context of that city's special status and its nonexclusive character.

This state, in a condition of emergence, has already been a subject of anticipation for too long. It should take place today, rather than tomorrow. However, we are willing to accept the proposal for a transitional stage, provided interim arrangements are not transformed into permanent status. The time frame must be condensed to respond to the dispossessed Palestinians' urgent need for sanctuary and to the occupied Palestinians' right to gain relief from oppression and to win recognition of their authentic will. During this phase, international protection for our people is most urgently needed, and the *de jure* application of the Fourth Geneva Convention is a necessary condition. The phases must not prejudice the outcome; rather they require an internal momentum and motivation to lead sequentially to sovereignty. Bilateral negotiations on the withdrawal of Israeli forces, the dissolution of Israeli administra-

changes and just agreements during the bilateral talks, multilateral negotiations will be meaningless. Regional stability, security, and development are the logical outcome of an equitable and just solution to the Palestinian question, which remains the key to the resolution of wider conflicts and concerns.

In its confrontation of wills between the legitimacy of the people and the illegality of the occupation, the intifada's message has been consistent: to embody the Palestinian state and to build its institutions and infrastructure. We seek recognition for this creative impulse which nurtures within it the potential nascent state. We have paid a heavy price for daring to substantiate our authenticity and to practice popular democracy in spite of the cruelty of occupation. It was a sheer act of will that brought us here, the same will which asserted itself in the essence of the intifada, as the cry for freedom, an act of civil resistance, and people's participation and empowerment. The intifada is our drive toward nation building and social transformation. We are here today with the support of our people, who have given themselves the right to hope and to make a stand for peace. We must recognize, as well, that some of our people harbor serious doubts and skepticism about this process. Within our democratic, social, and political structures, we have evolved a respect for pluralism and diversity, and we shall guard the opposition's right to differ within the parameters of mutual respect and national unity.

The process launched here must lead us to the light at the end of the tunnel, and this light is the promise of a new Palestine—free, democratic, and respectful of human rights and the integrity of nature.

Self-determination can neither be granted nor withheld at the whim of the political self-interest of others, for it is enshrined in all international charters and humanitarian law. We claim this right; we firmly assert it here before you and in the eyes of the rest of the world, for it is a sacred and inviolable right which we shall relentlessly pursue and exercise with dedication and self-confidence and pride.

Let us end the Palestinian-Israeli fatal proximity in this unnatural condition of occupation, which has already claimed too many lives. No dream of expansion or glory can justify the taking of a single life. Set us free to re-engage as neighbors and as equals on our holy land.

To our people in exile and under occupation, who have sent us to this appointment laden with their trust, love, and aspirations, we say that the load is heavy and the task is great, but we shall be true. In the words of our great national poet, Mahmoud Darwish: "My homeland is not a suitcase, and I am no traveler." To the exiled and the occupied, we say: You shall return and you shall remain and we will prevail for our cause is just. We will put on

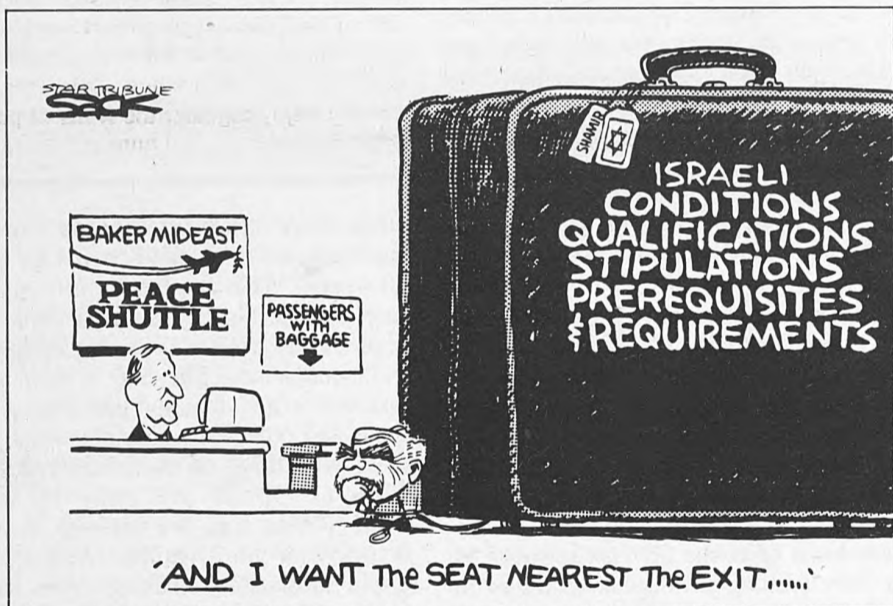
our embroidered robes and *kaffiyehs* and, in the sight of the world, celebrate together on the day of liberation.

Refugee camps are no fit home for people who had been reared on the land of Palestine, in the warmth of the sun and freedom. The hail of Israeli bombs, almost daily pouring on our defenseless civilian population in the refugee camps of Lebanon is no substitute for the healing rain of the homeland. Yet, the international will had ensured their return in United Nations Resolution 194—a fact willfully ignored and unenacted.

Similarly, all other resolutions pertinent to the Palestinian question, beginning with Resolution 181 through Resolutions 242 and 338 and ending with Security Council Resolution 681, have until now been relegated to the domain of public debate, rather than real implementation. They form the larger body of legality, including all relevant provisions of international law, within which any peaceful settlement must proceed. If international legitimacy and the rule of law are to prevail and govern relations among nations, they must be respected and impartially and uniformly implemented. We, as Palestinians, require nothing less than justice.

To Palestinians everywhere: today we bear in our hands the precious gift of your love and your pain, and we shall set it down gently here before the eyes of the world and say: There is a right here which must be acknowledged, the right to self-determination and statehood; there is strength and there is the scent of sacred incense in the air. Jerusalem, the heart of our homeland and the cradle of the soul, is shimmering through the barriers of occupation and deceit. The deliberate violation of its sanctity is also an act of violence against the collective human, cultural, and spiritual memory and an aggression against its enduring symbols of tolerance, magnanimity, and respect for cultural and religious authenticity. The cobbled streets of the Old City must not echo with the discordant beat of Israeli military boots; we must restore to them the chant of the *muezzin* the chimes of the church bells, and the prayers of all the faithful calling for peace in the City of Peace.

From Madrid, let us light the candle of peace and let the olive branch blossom. Let us celebrate the rituals of justice and rejoice in the hymns of truth, for the awe of the moment is a promise to the future, which we all must redeem. The Palestinians will be free and will stand tall among the community of nations in the fullness of the pride and dignity which, by right, belongs to all people. In the words of Chairman Arafat in 1974 before the UN General Assembly: "Let not the olive branch of peace fall from my hands." Let not the olive branch of peace fall from the hands of the Palestinian people. □



sheer will, we have molded the shape of the future of our people. Our parliament has articulated the message of a people with the courage to say "yes" to the challenge of history, just as it provided the reference, in its resolutions last month in Algiers and in the Central Council meeting this month in Tunis, to go forward to this historic conference. We cannot be made to bear the brunt

tion and the transfer of authority to the Palestinian people cannot proceed under coercion or threat in the current asymmetry of power. Israel must demonstrate its willingness to negotiate in good faith by immediately halting all settlement activity and land confiscation while implementing meaningful confidence-building measures. Without genuine progress, tangible constructive

\$10 Billion ...

Continued from page 1

23-91; *Christian Science Monitor*, 9-20-91; *Wall Street Journal*, 9-19-91.)

Israeli Settlements Are Illegal

At the heart of the debate is the question of Israeli settlement policy. As well-documented in these pages and in the mainstream press, Israeli settlement policy is nothing short of the rapid completion of the colonization of the entire land of historic Palestine—from the Mediterranean Sea to the River Jordan. With the opening up of Jewish emigration from the USSR in 1988, the Shamir government saw a golden opportunity. The influx of Soviet Jews

would swell the Israeli population (currently at 4.5 million, including nearly 1 million Palestinian Arabs with Israeli citizenship) and allow it to rapidly expand its colonizing settlements in the Golan Heights and the occupied Palestinian territory of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and Gaza. Their aim was to create an irreversible Israeli claim to the remaining territory that by rights and by original UN mandate was to have been an independent Palestinian state.

Successive U.S. administrations have opposed Israeli settlements, which are clearly illegal under international law. The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 established international standards governing the behavior of an occupying power and provided for the protection of civilian populations living under occupation. Both the United States and Israel are signatories to

the Fourth Geneva Convention, which was intended to forever bar the war crimes practiced under Nazi occupation. Article 49 of the Convention explicitly states: "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

In 1969, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations stated, "the part of Jerusalem that came under the control of Israel in the June war, like other areas occupied by Israel, is occupied territory and hence subject to the provisions of international law governing the rights and obligations of an occupying power." In 1977, President Carter stated, "The matter of settlements in the occupied territories has always been characterized by our government, by me and my predecessors as an illegal action." President Reagan chose to ignore international law, disagreeing that the settlements

were illegal. He would only state that they were "unnecessarily provocative." (See *Middle East International*, 9-27-91, for a chronology of U.S. settlement policy by Donald Neff.) According to Bush and Baker, the settlements are at least an "obstacle to peace."

U.S. Aid Supports Settlements

U.S. aid to Israel, whether military, economic, or housing-loan guarantees, is given outright with no strings attached and no oversight. There is no provision to actively prevent U.S. dollars from paying for Israeli settlements or other aspects of the occupation. According to Yossi Sarid, a member of the Israeli Knesset from the Citizen's Rights Party, "In theory, the Israeli government was obligated not to channel American

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"Don't Pay for Occupation"

National Campaign to End U.S. Support of Israeli Occupation in the West Bank

Even while the United States convenes a Middle East peace conference, a crisis of tragic proportions exists in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian lands of the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian people and land continue to be occupied.

We're paying for the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. It is wrong. And it has to stop.

As our cities crumble and budget cuts devastate our education and health care systems, as millions of unemployed people struggle against despair and the growing number of homeless face the approaching harsh winter, how can we justify spending urgently needed resources to perpetuate the homelessness of another nation?

- Since 1967, more than half of the land of Gaza and at least 70 percent of the West Bank has been confiscated. (According to B'Tselem, an Israeli human-rights organization)
- 200,000 Israeli settlers now make up about 13 percent of the population in the occupied territories. (U.S. State Department Report)
- Since the Gulf war, Israel has prevented 50,000 Gaza breadwinners (40 percent of the workforce) and 25,000 from the West Bank (35 percent of the workforce) from returning to work inside Israel. Eighty percent of the nearly 2 million Palestinians living under occupation are now living below the poverty line. During the last four years of the intifada, or Palestinian uprising:
- More than 1,000 people have been killed; of these nearly one-fifth were children. More than 100,000 have been wounded, more than half of whom were children. (Save the Children Swedish Report)
- Nearly 2,000 homes have been demolished as a form of collective punishment.

The Shamir government insists it will never trade "land for peace" and U.S. officials call Israeli settlement activity the biggest obstacle to peace in the region. Yet the United States continues to subsidize this occupation!

Israel is the single largest recipient of U.S. economic and military aid, receiving nearly \$4 billion annually or 20 percent of the entire U.S. foreign-aid budget for 1991. While U.S. support translates to \$900 for each Israeli annually, U.S. aid to the entire African continent translates to just one dollar for every African each year.

Israel is now requesting another \$10 billion in housing loan guarantees. If approved by Congress, our government will, in effect, agree to cosign a loan from U.S. banks. This would happen despite the fact that the Export-Import Bank, a U.S. agency that promotes foreign trade, gives Israel a "D" level credit rating on an A-through-F scale. According to the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID), Israel currently owes the U.S. Treasury more than \$4.5 billion in outstanding loans while it owes U.S. banks \$148 million.

How would the American people respond if they only knew these staggering facts about our government's national budget priorities and the strain put upon our failing banking institutions?

How would these billions of dollars in loans and in military and economic aid seem to people in light of our massive defense budget when compared to social spending?

The federal government presently allocates \$5.3 billion to education, \$1.7 billion to the Women Infant and Children's Program, and \$1.2 billion to the Head Start Program.

Since U.S. aid to Israel is given as a

lump sum with no oversight or accountability, it is difficult to determine exactly what portion of U.S. aid funds occupation. However, Israel's own Housing Ministry reports that it spent \$500 million on settlement construction in 1990. Some estimate that a full \$2 billion of the Israeli budget is directly attributable to the cost of maintaining this occupation.

Whatever amount of U.S. taxpayers' money is determined that Israel spends to maintain the occupation should be suspended.

The "Don't Pay for Occupation" Campaign aims to move the people across this nation to end U.S. complicity with the Israeli occupation by offering information and a plan of action.

- National conferences held in Washington, DC and San Francisco to launch the "Don't Pay for Occupation" campaign.
- Speak-outs and educational materials for use in your own community, documenting U.S. aid to Israel and contrasting funding of occupation to social cuts at home.
- Promotional materials for your community such as posters, mass transit ads, buttons, and bumper stickers with the campaign theme, "Don't Pay for Occupation."
- Petitions and sample letters for constituency efforts aimed at Congress and the administration at key junctures in the foreign-aid process.
- Possible ballot initiatives in selected communities in the fall of 1992.

We urge you to join us in this campaign. Endorse the campaign. Let us know how you can participate. The situation is urgent. The time to act is now. We will be in close touch with you throughout the year. Together, we will make this campaign a success.

Palestine Solidarity Committee
P. O. Box 372, Peck Slip Station
New York, NY 10272
(212) 227-1435.

Organizational Endorsers

Capitol District Committee for Palestinian Rights; Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES); Civilian Casualty Fund; Emergency Committee to Stop the U.S. War in the Middle East; F.O.R. Middle East Task Force; International Jewish Peace Union (Bay Area); MADRE; Methodist Federation for Social Action; Middle East Children's Alliance; Middle East Witness; Mobilization for Survival; Mount Diablo Peace Center; Out Now; Peace and Freedom Party; Pledge of Resistance; Radio Free Maine; Resource Center for Nonviolence; Union of Palestinian Women's Associations in North America; WESPAC (Westchester People's Action Coalition); Westchester Campaign for Middle East Justice

Individual Endorsers*

Prof. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod; Prof. Naseer Aruri; David Aube; Barbara Nimri Aziz—WBAI; Don Betz—Chair, International NGO Coordinating Committee on Palestine; Rev. Dorsey Blake—Director, Center for Urban Black Studies; Frances and Robert Boehm—Chairs, Five Towns Forum; Elise Boulding—Professor Emerita, Dartmouth; Gene L. Bruksin; Leslie Cagan; Louise Cainkar—Executive Director, Palestine Human Rights Information Center; David Cline—Vietnam Veterans Against the War; Barbara Cross; Susan Davidoff—Codirector, OUT NOW; Joan W. Drake—American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee; Francis T. Farenthold—Foundation for a Compassionate Society; Prof. Samih Farsoun—Palestine National Council; Joel Fischer; Yvonne Golden; Connie Hogarth—Exec. Director, Westchester People's Action; Nubar Hovsepian; Deena Hurwitz—Resource Center for Nonviolence; Casey Kasem; Ying-Lee Kelly—Aide to Congressman Ronald V. Dellums; Scott Kennedy—Middle East Witness; Roger Leisner; Barbara Lubin—Middle East Children's Alliance; Julie Marten; Rev. George McClain—Executive Director, Methodist Federation for Social Action; Eugene "Gus" Newport—Former Mayor, Berkeley, California; Jack O'Dell—Rainbow Coalition; Fr. William O'Donnell; Bonnie Rimawi; Judy Rohrer—Pledge of Resistance; Moshe Rothenberg—Brooklyn New Jewish Agenda; Prof. Edward Said; Elissa Sampson—New York International Jewish Peace Union; Angela Sanbrano—CISPES; Susan Sarandon; Rev. David Schilling—Fellowship of Reconciliation; Maudelle Shirek—City Councilperson, Berkeley, California; Vivian Stromberg—Executive Director, MADRE; Miriam Thompson—UAW Local 259, New York City; Genevieve Vaughan—Foundation for a Compassionate Society; Alice Walker; Brian Willson.

*Partial List. Organizations used for identification purposes only. □

\$10 Billion ...

Continued from page 5

can aid into construction in the occupied territories. In practice, however, even if the building funds did not come from the same pocket, they were from the same pair of pants.... Through a simple circular movement, dollars flowed to security, education, and welfare, while shekels freed from these budgets flowed into the construction of at least 200 settlements. Thus, the Israeli government 'deceived' the American government, which agreeably played dumb."

The issue of the settlements and U.S. aid began to be of increasing concern to U.S. legislators in the spring when Israel seemed to announce a new settlement on the eve of each of Baker's visits to the region. In June, Congressman Bryant from Texas sponsored legislation that would have reduced the U.S. foreign-aid package to Israel by \$82.5 million, the amount that the U.S. State Department certified that Israel spent on new and expanded settlements in 1991. While the legislation was defeated, it got 45 cosponsors.

In recent weeks, Peace Now has demonstrated that more than \$500 million was spent by Israel on illegal settlements in 1990. According to Israel's Central Bank, Israel's proposed \$39 billion 1992 budget includes \$2 billion for Jewish settlements and belated infrastructure in the occupied Palestinian territories. The proposed budget deficit would total \$3.7 billion—far beyond the maximum recommended by Israel's own Finance Ministry and Central Bank.

Housing Loan Guarantees Are Not Free

Israel has argued that the housing-loan guarantees will not cost U.S. taxpayers a cent; they are merely guarantees and Israel surely will not default on the loans. Israel's own budget deficit seems to suggest the strong possibility of default, as does

Israel's low credit rating. Even if Israel never defaults, the loan guarantees still bear a large price tag for the U.S. taxpayer.

Under new accounting rules which took effect October 1 as a result of last year's budget agreement, the U.S. government must set aside a fraction of a loan's value in case of default. The amount is determined by the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office and is based on estimates of the risk of default. This amount must be budgeted within the total foreign-aid account; it would require a cut somewhere else in the foreign-aid budget. Preliminary estimates are that \$800 million to \$1 billion will have to be set aside for the \$10 billion Israeli loan guarantees. The entire U.S. foreign-aid budget is just over \$15 billion. Israel has already been allocated \$3.1 billion of that amount. Add another billion and Israel would be consuming nearly 30 percent of the entire worldwide foreign-aid package—all this for a country with 0.001 percent of the world's population.

The Human Cost of U.S. and Israeli Policy

Too little attention has been paid to the impact of this debate on the three communities most severely affected by it: Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel, who are in desperate need of housing and jobs; the indigenous Palestinian population of the occupied West Bank and Gaza and those living inside Israel as well, who are also in desperate need of housing, jobs, and fulfillment of their national, political, and human rights; and people across the United States, who are also in desperate need of housing, jobs, and human rights and who are being asked to foot the bill.

How does this debate actually affect a Soviet Jewish family who wants to leave the Soviet Union? Provided with an exit visa good only for Israel, the family may end up in one of the 1,700 new housing units built in Arad, a remote Israeli town in

the Negev desert. Faced with a rapidly rising unemployment rate of 10 percent and with a housing shortage that is making thousands of Israeli citizens "choose" low-cost, subsidized housing in illegal West Bank, Gaza, and Golan settlements, a Soviet Jew cannot leave Israel until securing an Israeli passport, which takes at least one year and the repayment of resettlement subsidies. Will this Soviet Jew join the estimated 30 percent of recent immigrants lined up at the Soviet Consulate in Tel Aviv seeking permission to return to the Soviet Union? Or will they send word back home, slowing the tide of immigration to below the 7,000 new immigrants who arrived in August, down from an average of 20,000 in previous months? Will it cause them to ask why the U.S. and Western Europe have not opened their doors to Soviet Jews after pressuring so long and hard for the Soviet Union to let them go?

How does this debate affect the West Bank Palestinian family in Ramallah, just north of Jerusalem, whose land is being taken in order to expand the nearby Modi'im settlement block, which already has a population of 15,000 settlers? Where will this Palestinian family find work when their olive and almond trees are uprooted to make room for large apartment complexes? How will they deal with the rising rate of unemployment that stands at 40 percent and with an influx of illegal settlers already numbering 229,000 and projected to increase by another 100,000 if a planned 24,000 additional housing units are constructed in the West Bank in the coming five years? Where can they turn when their home is demolished, like more than 1,000 others in the past three years, to make room for ever-expanding settlements?

How does this debate affect the mid-west U.S. family whose 26 weeks of unemployment benefits ran out in July

when Bush refused to sign an emergency appropriation to extend benefits for another 20 weeks? What can the 37 million Americans without health insurance think of billions of tax dollars financing colonization and occupation? The \$10 billion in loan guarantees are actually intended to build roads and other infrastructure; what should those who drive on American roads think when 61 percent are badly in need of repair? What can we tell the 3 million homeless or the 27 million Americans living in substandard housing? Who will pay for the 4.2 million units of affordable housing that are desperately needed here in the United States?

What Can We Do?

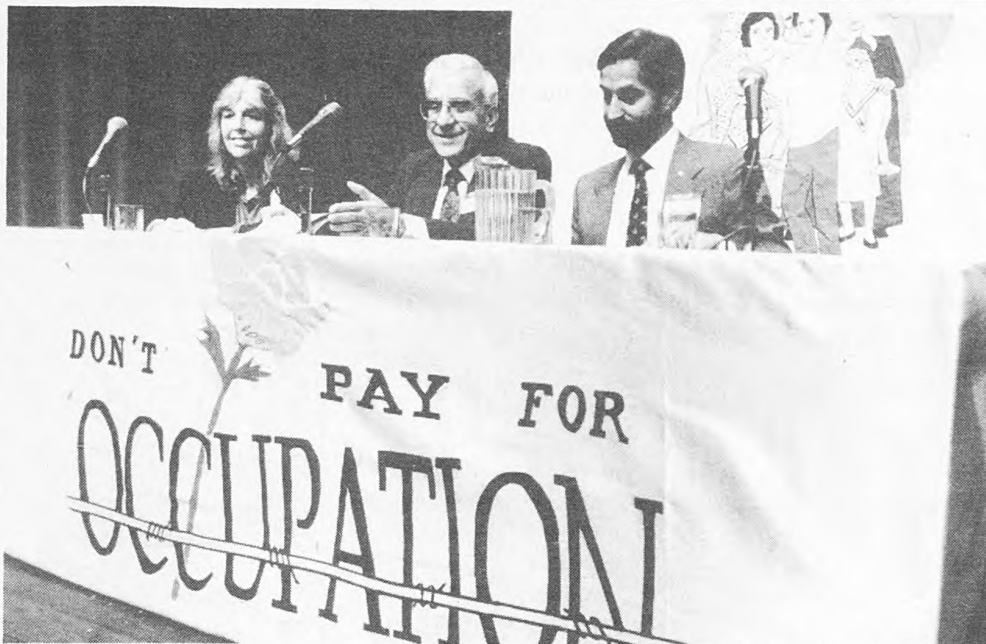
Clearly we cannot solve the social and economic crisis at home with the small fraction of the U.S. budget that goes to foreign aid, let alone the nearly 30 percent that may go to Israel. It is the \$300 billion U.S. defense budget that needs to be redirected to meet the human needs of people in the United States and the world over for housing, jobs, education, and health care. But clearly we cannot continue to pay for bill for illegal settlements, nor for occupation and repression.

The 120-day delay is a window of opportunity to organize, to educate, to make our voices heard in the local offices of Congresspeople. An infusion of \$10 billion in housing-loan guarantees to Israel, on top of over \$4 billion in annual foreign aid, makes the United States the biggest funder of occupation in the world. It is clear that without U.S. aid, the settlements would stop and the occupation would have to end. □

PSC's mailgram alert to Senator Leahy and Congressman Obey continues. Call 1-800-325-6000 and ask for hotline #9917. A mailgram will be sent in your name opposing the loan guarantees until Israel stops building and expanding settlements. You will be billed \$6.75 for one message or \$9.75 for two. Call the White House comment line at 1-202-456-1111 to let Bush know how you feel about the issue.

"Don't Pay for Occupation" Campaign Kicks Off

By Bill Hofmann



San Francisco "Don't Pay For Occupation" conference; from left: Barbara Lubin, Naseer Aruri, Don Betz.

Joe Hakim

Palestine Solidarity Committee launched its national campaign to end U.S. funding of Israeli occupation with two conferences, one in Washington D.C. and one in San Francisco, during one of the more exciting periods in recent Middle East history. As D.C. conference keynote speaker Eqbal Ahmed noted, the Palestinians had successfully engaged in true guerilla tactics: they went to the Madrid conference as the losers, having yielded on many important issues, and transformed their weakness into strength. While Israel and Syria bickered, the Palestinian delegation maintained the high road, and even a conservative paper like the *Washington Times* said that the Palestinians were the real victors at the conference.

But the more things change, the more they stay the same. The massive propaganda gains of the Palestinians in Madrid contrast with the situation on the ground in the Occupied Territories. Chief Palestinian spokesperson Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi returned to her home in Ramallah to face the threat of prison, accused of having met with the PLO (a serious crime in Israel). Settlements and land confiscation continue, and the Palestinians still face a harsh military occupation which denies them the basic human and national rights.

In this context, PSC's campaign takes on special importance. In order to guarantee that the talks, however flawed they may be, continue and have the chance of pro-

ducing any result, it is imperative that the United States hold the Israelis accountable, and deny them the money they need to maintain the occupation.

A major part of PSC's campaign is to make the occupation real for Americans. So an important component of both conferences was education. In Washington, Philippa Strum (a professor at City University of New York and cofounder of the American-Israeli Civil Liberties Coalition) presented an overview of the illegality of Israeli occupation under the Fourth Geneva Convention. Professor Samih Farsoun (a member of the Palestine National Council, the Palestinian parliament in exile) spoke of Palestinian national rights and U.S. policy. In San Francisco in both plenary sessions and workshops speakers such as Barbara Lubin, Executive Director of the Middle East Children's Alliance, and Jeanne Butterfield, Executive Director of Palestine Solidarity Committee, talked about the realities of occupation, in particular Israeli environmental terrorism, its policy towards Palestinian land, resources and families. Professor Naseer Aruri spoke on the Madrid conference and on the state of U.S./Israeli relations. Don Betz, chair of the International Coordinating Committee of NGOs on Palestine, spoke of the legacy of nongovernmental organization work to promote Palestinian rights.

The other focus of PSC's campaign is of course the aid that supports the occupation. David Bowen from the Council for the National Interest spoke about the Congressional aid process at the D.C. conference, in a panel with Joost Hilterman, a former staffer at Al Haq, a Palestinian human rights organization, and Roger

Newell of Jobs with Peace, a national organization which has made important links between pro-peace communities and communities of color.

Joel Beinin, a professor at Stanford and member of the editorial board of *Middle East Report* spoke in San Francisco about the dynamics of the U.S.-Israeli relationship. He articulated a position shared by many PSC members, that the U.S. govern-

ment aids Israel not because it is in the thrall of the Israeli lobby, but because it serves U.S. interests in the region (he elaborates on this position in the November/December issue of *Middle East Report*). Sharon Rose of *Palestine Focus* led a workshop—and a debate—about the mechanics of the foreign aid process.

Workshops were for many attendees the highlight of both conferences. In Washington, an aid for Congressman Dymally and a lobbyist for National CISPES spoke about lobbying Congress. Media outreach strategies, fundraising, and organization building were the focus of workshops on both coasts. CISPES also led a workshop in San Francisco on campaign planning. One of the major goals of the campaign and an important achievement of the conference was the active involvement of other progressive organizations, such as Jobs with Peace, CISPES, and Pledge of Resistance.

The two conferences gave activists from across the country a handle on the issues and challenges we face in changing U.S. policy in the region. Where do we go from here? PSC Executive Director Jeanne Butterfield said, "In January, the \$10 billion loan guarantees return to the front burner. We have an ongoing letter writing and mailgram campaign. In March we plan to present our case to Congress at the human-rights hearings on aid to Israel. The 25th anniversary of the occupation follows in June, when there will be events in many cities. The time has come to combine grassroots organizing with pressure on Congress and the administration to allow the peace process to achieve a just settlement." □

Letter to the Editors

Arab Feminist Anthology—Call for Articles

I am gathering materials for an anthology of writings by Arab feminists. If you are Arab-American, Arab-Canadian, or of Arab/Middle Eastern origin and now living in the United States or Canada, please consider contributing to this book. It will be published by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press. The purpose of the anthology is to help create visibility of Arab feminists, to provide a forum where we can speak about issues that concern us, and to help sustain all political activists.

All forms of writing are acceptable. Possible topics include: history, identity, home, activism, creativity, racism, sexism, classism, homophobia. To receive a detailed call for submissions, send SASE to: J. Kadi, P. O. Box 7556, Minneapolis, MN 55407. □

Noam Chomsky Interview ...

Continued from page 8

terms basically satisfactory to Israeli rejectionists, effectively excluding the Palestinians. Failure of the rejectionist "peace conference," particularly if it is attributed to Israeli intransigence, might lay the basis for war, a matter widely discussed in Israel.

PF: What do you see as likely scenarios for the upcoming "peace process"? Who will get the blame if nothing comes of it?

NC: The United States will surely exert serious efforts to bring about the conference, which is a win-win situation for U.S. power: a victory for traditional U.S. rejectionism if it succeeds, a political plus whether it succeeds or fails, given the certainty that public commentary will present U.S. rejectionism as the soul of moderation and benevolence. It is not impossible that the tacit alliance between Israel and the Arab Facade will be given an explicit form,

with Egypt and Syria also brought into the picture as U.S. clients (Egypt, a longstanding one) and the Palestinians excluded. If the Arab world is sufficiently demoralized, that option might succeed in the short run. That would require some kind of settlement on the Golan Heights and meaningless "autonomy" arrangements for the Palestinians as a gesture to nationalist sentiment in the Arab world. This outcome seems to me unlikely, but not inconceivable. A more likely outcome is a more elusive agreement that will advance the process leading toward the rejectionist settlement favored by the United States and both Israeli political groupings and not seriously opposed by the Arab client regimes.

Whatever the outcome, the task of the intellectual community is to denounce those who stand in the way of the noble peace-making efforts of the "honest broker." But that is hardly more than a corollary to general doctrine, even more rigidly observed in this case than most others. □

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PF: Critics of the U.S./Israeli relationship have frequently debated whether U.S. policy goals or the Israel lobby are decisive in determining U.S. policy toward Israel and the Middle East. How do you interpret the current U.S./Israeli disagreement over the \$10 billion loan guarantees in that context? Why did Bush take such a firm stand? How would you evaluate the U.S. media coverage?

NC: To assess the relative force of U.S. policy goals and Israeli lobby pressures is not easy, if only because they so often coincide. My general feeling is that the former predominate. Apart from business sectors, which are basically lobbying their own representatives in the state management, domestic groupings tend to be influential insofar as they line up with segments of real power (which, in our society, means corporate-based power). If there is a power split, or if the issue is marginal to the concerns of major power interests, lobby influence becomes a significant factor. If the executive takes a firm stand on matters of significant and broadly recognized state interest, the lobbies are likely to fade away. The present confrontation was a case in point, and the outcome, in my view, a foregone conclusion. In fact, if the administration wanted to arouse a powerful wave of anti-Israel sentiment in the country, with anti-Semitic undertones as well, it would not be very difficult; I'm sure that the PR folk would know just how to proceed.

In the present case, there is broad elite support for the mislabeled "peace conference," which offers the United States the possibility of achieving goals to which it has long been committed; and for the Bush administration, there are political gains over and above these generally shared interests. In the face of this common front, the lobby had little force.

It is important to recognize that, for many years, the United States has barred the way to any meaningful peace process in the region, standing virtually alone in the world (apart from Israel) in rejecting Palestinian self-determination. The issue comes up regularly at the UN. The Security Council is out, because the United States has made it clear, since January 1976, that it will veto any resolution calling for a nonrejectionist political settlement. At the General Assembly, the votes are regularly near unanimous (United States, Israel opposed) in favor of an international conference and a settlement that recognizes the rights of the Palestinians alongside of Israel (in December 1990, 144-2; in December 1989, 151-3, Dominica voting with the US-Israel; etc., regularly). The United States has taken a rather isolated position on these matters ever since it backed Israel's rejection of Sadat's 1971 peace offer, which offered nothing to the Palestinians and was, in fact, scarcely distinguishable from official US policy. While the United States cannot technically veto General Assembly resolutions, a U.S. "Nay" amounts to a veto, given U.S. power. That is true on a whole host of issue on which the United States is isolated, surely this one.

There are two basic reasons why the United States has resolutely blocked the peace process:

(1) Any participants in an international conference will support Palestinian rights, as the UN votes illustrate.

(2) The Middle East is U.S. turf; no one may interfere, whether an independent indigenous force, or an outside element.

What Eisenhower called the most "strategically important area in the world" must be in U.S. hands. Kissinger once

observed that a central part of his Middle East diplomacy was to keep the Europeans and the Japanese out. Nothing has changed since. The United States will now grant the USSR a symbolic role, assuming that in their present straits, they will politely sing Yankee Doodle if asked. And the British

argument can be given either way; thus a political settlement might contribute to "stability" by eliminating the inflammatory Palestinian issue, as Arab conservatives have argued. Even extreme advocates of Israeli power of the *New Republic* variety have occasionally called for political settle-

the need to divert the public not only from severe domestic problems, but also from the consequences of Bush's disastrous foreign-policy initiatives, most recently the aftermath of the Gulf slaughter: Bush's tacit support for Saddam Hussein as he performed the necessary task of crushing independent democratic and nationalist forces and maintaining "stability." Even if the "peace conference" fails, it is a net gain for the administration, showing that it tried to play the honest broker but was foiled by the extremists. To sacrifice all of this because some Israeli fanatics demand loan guarantees four months earlier would be pretty silly. Hence the Bush administration position with its wide elite support and the predictable collapse of the lobby.

As for U.S. media coverage, it is so close to nonexistent that there is little to discuss. Even the basic terms of the Shamir-Peres-Baker plan have yet to appear in the mainstream media. The media and intellectual community adopt U.S. rejectionism reflexively: it is the "moderate" stance, the basis for all further discussion. The history, documentary record, reasons are all off the agenda, "political incorrect" and therefore unmentionable. Even the U.S.-Israel refusal to permit Palestinians to choose their own representatives to negotiate the planned capitulation is regarded by the media as forthright and honorable.

It's hard to imagine an article discussing the background for the Israeli law that prevents any contact with the PLO, a law passed under David Ben-Gurion's initiative to bar contact with Yitzhak Shamir and other Jewish terrorists. Still less can one imagine an article honestly stating the logical consequences of the doctrine that advocates of terror should be barred from the negotiating table. The media also take for granted that the loan guarantees should be granted for "humanitarian" reasons, generally failing to ask even the most elementary questions (except for an occasional letter to the editor): for example, why is it "humanitarian" to accept Israeli government demands that Soviet Jews be barred freedom of choice and forced to Israel? No one who is restricted to media fare could hope to have a serious understanding of what is taking place in the Middle East.

PF: Why was the Shamir government at first so willing to confront Bush, and why did they back down from a confrontation? What Israeli opposition is there to the loan guarantees and to the overall policy of rapid and aggressive expansion of settlements in the West Bank.

NC: The governing Likud party has internal problems, one of them being the post-Shamir succession. Ariel Sharon has been battling for the leadership for years. His strong card is the popular support on the right for a huge settlement program, draining billions of dollars from other claims (military, absorption of immigrants). The Likud coalition might collapse, or Sharon might be able to take it over, if it were not to go along with the settlement program, which was the real issue in the U.S.-Israel confrontation. The United States has always favored a more cynical approach: instead of brazen flaunting of new settlements whenever Baker visits, more subtle "thickening" of old ones while everyone pretends not to notice. Even a brief delay in the loan guarantees might well hamper the settlement program, which requires that vast funds be diverted from absorbing Soviet Jews. The Shamir government backed down only because they had no choice. They learned a simple lesson: their domestic lobby is ineffective in the face of a resolute stand by real U.S. power.

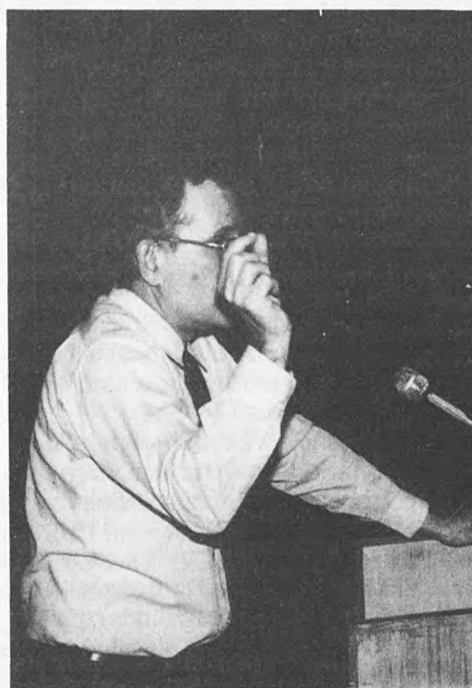
Within Israel, there is no detectable opposition to the loan guarantees, to my knowledge, but even some elements on the right oppose the Sharon settlement program, recognizing that it undercuts the possibility for Israel to gain a settlement on

Interview with Noam Chomsky

"The United States has resolutely blocked the peace process"



Noam Chomsky



Steve Goldfield/Palestine Focus

are regarded as relatively safe loyalists. But independent forces are barred.

The widely hailed "window of opportunity" granted by the Gulf war is real enough: the United States now believes that it is in a position to impose its traditional rejectionism in defiance of the rest of the world, which is either cowed or preoccupied elsewhere. The traditional U.S. strategic conception for the region has been that the oil wealth is to be managed by what British imperialists called an "Arab Facade," essentially, family dictatorships dependent on the United States. They are protected from nationalist forces by regional gendarmes, preferably non-Arab: Turkey, Israel, Iran (under the Shah), Pakistan, occasionally others. U.S.-British muscle is on call if needed.

There has long been a tacit alliance between the Arab Facade in the Gulf and the regional enforcers, including Israel, which the United States and Saudi Arabia regarded as a barrier to Nasserite and other nationalist pressures on the Gulf rulers. The alliance has now surfaced more openly than in the past. As far as the United States is concerned, a regional actor is useful if it plays a role in maintaining this system—contributing to what is called "stability" or "order." The Arab Facade has its obvious role, as do the regional enforcers. The Palestinians offer nothing, neither wealth nor power. In fact they are a negative factor, a disruptive element that stirs up nationalist sentiments. It therefore follows, by elementary principles of statecraft, that they have no human rights.

Note that it does not follow that U.S. opposition to Palestinian rights is graven in stone. Throughout this period, there has been an elite split over whether U.S. ends are best served by supporting Israeli rejectionism or by joining the international consensus on a political settlement. An

ment, notably when it seemed that the intifada might be imposing costs on Israel that are too high. It could be argued that domestic pressures were a "swing factor," which led the United States to adopt consistently rejectionist positions in the face of elite splits. That is, in my view, not implausible, given the near-uniform support of articulate opinion for Israeli power since 1967—an interesting phenomenon that has more to do with domestic U.S. affairs than with the Middle East in my opinion. If that interpretation is correct, then mobilization of popular pressures might well lead to change in the unswervingly rejectionist U.S. policies. Given Israel's reliance on a huge U.S. subsidy, it is hardly in doubt that such pressures could, at least, mitigate the repression of the Palestinians and the denial of their most elementary rights.

Mainstream Israeli politics have been divided between two forms of rejectionism: the Likud variety, which calls for Israel to extend its sovereignty over the territories, and the Labor Party variety, which prefers that Israel take what it wants (resources, valuable land, etc.) while avoiding any responsibility for the bulk of the population of the occupied territories, who are to be left stateless or under Jordanian administration. The United States has traditionally supported the more rational Labor Party variety of rejectionism.

U.S. rejectionism was explicit in the Shamir-Peres-Baker plan of 1989, which, as Baker has always clearly emphasized, is the only game in town and the basis for the U.S.-run "peace conference." The Bush administration does not want to lose the chance to impose this rejectionist settlement at last. One reason is that it really would fulfill long-standing U.S. strategic goals. A second is that it will be hailed across the spectrum as a magnificent achievement of the Peacemaker. That concern is particularly important in the light of

Noam Chomsky was interviewed by Palestine Focus in September 1991 just before the announcement of the Madrid conference.

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