

EDWARD W. SAID Author of The Politics of

Dispossession and Culture and Imperialism

# PEACE AND ITS DISCONTENTSAYS ON

PALESTINE IN THE MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS

"Said is a brilliant and unique amalgam of  
scholar, aesthete and political activist ....  
He challenges and stimulates our thinking in  
every area." -Washington Post Book World

PREFACE BY CHRISTOPHER MICHELS

Edward W. Said

# Peace and Its Discontents

An internationally renowned literary and cultural critic, Edward W. Said is University Professor at Columbia University. He is the author of fourteen books, including *Orientalism*, which was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and *Culture and Imperialism*.

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**Peace and Its Discontents**

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Essays on Palestine

in the Middle East Peace Process

# Edward W. Said

With a Preface by  
Christopher Hitchens



VINTAGE BOOKS

A Division of Random House, Inc.

New York

A VINTAGE ORIGINAL, JANUARY 1996

FIRST EDITION

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The Christian Science Publishing Society: Excerpt from the editorial "The Gaza Bombings" (The Christian Science Monitor, April 11, 1995), copyright © 1995 by The Christian Science Publishing Society. Reprinted by permission.

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Ha'aretz: Excerpt from "The Israeli Version of Peace" by Meron Benbenisti (Ha'aretz, December 22, 1994).

Reprinted by permission of Ha'aretz.

Sara Roy: Excerpt from article by Sara Roy (The Christian Science Monitor, April 12,

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Said, Edward W.

Peace and its discontents : essays on Palestine  
in the Middle East peace process / by Edward W. Said :  
with a preface by Christopher Hitchens. - 1st ed.  
p. cm.

.A Vintage original"-T.p. verso.

ISBN 0-679-76725-8

1. Jewish-Arab relations--1973-

2. Israel-Arab conflicts. 3. Israel. Treaties, etc.

Munaḥamat al-Taḥrir al-Filasṭīniyah,

1993 Sept. 13. I. Title.

DS119-7-S3324 -

956.04-dc20 95-34226

CI P

Book design by Mill Risberg

Manufactured in the United States of America

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For Professor Israel Shahak,  
Champion of Peace and Justice  
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my assistant Dr. Zaineb Istrabadi for helping me so ably in the preparation of the original articles that were published from September 1993 till May 1995. I am also very grateful to Jihad al-Khazen of al-Hayat and Husni Guindi and Mona Anis of al-Ahram Weekly for their editorial support and cordiality. Ms. Anis worked with me on the Arabic version of these pieces, and to her skill and commitment I am most indebted. Some of these articles were published in The Nation, The London Review of Books, Le Monde diplomatique, and The Progressive, whose late editor Erwin Knoll was a man of principle and courage (his untimely death was a blow to journalistic standards of integrity and high seriousness). My London and New York

editors-Frances Coady and Shelley Wanger-gave me the benefit of their insights, practiced eyes, and friendship; to them both I am extremely grateful.

Finally, a word about the form of the articles themselves. Although in many ways they overlap one another and reiterate themes and observations, I have edited them only to eliminate too insistent repetitions and very occasionally to clarify and bring up to date what I did not know at the time of writing. In any event these pieces were written above all else as eyewitness reports and commentaries to accompany (and to demystify) momentous de

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velopments whose purport was often misleadingly interpreted or deliberately falsified. They have been kept pretty much as they are so that the English and American reader can find in them a dis senting record of what took place for almost two years, from the "historic handshake" on the White House lawn in 1993 until, roughly speaking, its second anniversary.

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Preface by Christopher Hitchens

" .... And they call it Peace."

If it were possible to make one-just one-literary reform in the  
oppressive litany of cliches and received opinions that is  
delivered to us by modern journalistic discourse, my nomination  
for the re form would be this. No editor or headline writer or  
columnist or think-piece merchant should be allowed to employ  
the word moderate and the word reasonable as if they were  
synonymous or coterminous. Look at what happens in the  
absence of this reform. Even the noblest of words-the word  
rational-becomes degraded by slothful association. Before too  
long it is the "moderate and rational forces" who are prevailing.  
Next it is "the voices of reason" which must be attended to if the  
"moderates" are to triumph. (We know who the "moderates" are,  
of course. They are the ones who know what's good for them.  
Anyway, they never fail to proclaim them selves and have, by

now, earned title to a useless term of art. The feudal absolutists of Saudi Arabia are moderates because they listen to *raison d'etat*. Oliver North's Iranian business partners were-re member?-moderates by definition because they were engaged in bidding for American high-tech weaponry. If this little essay were being written in French, the slight subliminal connection between reason and right would be enough in itself to convulse the most carapaced cynic with irrepressible mirth.)

Any fool can see how the trick is worked. This man is a critic of

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the "peace process" (two other words which we'll examine in a moment). He is therefore, by his own confession, no moderate. He may even be deaf to the voice of reason. And this, after all we've done for him ....

And here is how "moderation" sounds in practice. We discover it right at home, feet up after a self-satisfied day, in its most secure and contented domicile-the front page of The New York Times. The date of the report is September 14, 1993. The occasion is the handshake between Messrs. Rabin and Arafat, encompassed by the burly arms and shoulders of President Clinton, on the White House lawn:

The jaded are awed. Even for a New Age Presidency, there were a lot of men in the audience crying. George Stephanopoulos, the Clinton aide, and Rahm Emanuel, the White House advisor who had helped arrange the logistics, were crying. So was the Hollywood contingent-Ron Silver and Richard Dreyfuss-along with Leon Wieseltier, the literary editor of The New Republic. "Do you believe this?" Mr. Dreyfuss asked Mr. Wieseltier. "And you're the guy who saw those aliens land in that movie," Mr. Wieseltier replied, referring to the actor's role in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

The same editions of the entire courtier press informed us that Bill Clinton had labored on his own remarks until almost dawn that very day, not feeling he had found the right note until he had



a personal encounter with the Book of Joshua. So here is moderation at work, both in its formation and in its expression: consulting holy texts, evoking the New Age, puzzling over the portents and au

guries, summoning the sympathetic magic of Hollywood, weeping freely, and invoking the intercession of extraterrestrials. If The New York Times was describing any remotely analogous "process" in the Middle East or Africa, we may imagine in what pitying and condescending and "rational" terms it might do so.

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As it happens, I was in the crowd on the White House lawn that very morning. I don't often choose to get any wear out of my press pass, because I can't stand to be used as an extra in photo ops that are orchestrated by our masters, and because there is never an op

portunity to ask a question. (Unless, of course, one has taken the precaution of acquiring "moderate" credentials, which come expensive even in network terms these days.) Still, curiosity overcame cynicism, and, I will admit, optimism vanquished the long experience of defeat and disappointment. One of my barometers, in the calibration of this fluctuating condition, was Edward Said. We spoke daily; sometimes more frequently. "Come on, Edward, the president has invited you." "Which president?" "Well, I meant Clinton, but if you allude to Chairman Arafat, it's notorious that he wants you too. What can it hurt? It's a mutual recognition, after all." Edward was insistent. Clinton was a phony and a posturing pharisee. (Well, I would say defensively, I knew that.) Arafat cared more about being called "Mr. President" than he did about the sufferings of his own people. Here, as a non-Palestinian, I didn't feel that I could urge any more suffering or be more militant than the chairman himself. "But, Edward, you spoke at Algiers. You were one of the authors of the two-state solution. Why make the best the enemy of the good?" He snorted at my gullibility. "This is a sellout, a shabby and abortive thing. Stay clear of it."

Later in the week, White House people came to call. "We want to sell this to Arab Americans. They keep asking: 'If it's so great, how come Edward Said isn't on board?'" I realized that Said could have named his own price for doing what I had done as

part of my journalistic daily round and merely agreeing to be in the photo op. Some people adore to be part of the furniture of the stage. It con

vinces them, and can be used to convince their grandchildren, that they were present when "history" was being made.

In the end, I wrote a column which mentioned all the pitfalls and unfairnesses and absurdities of the agreement but which stoutly argued that it was a believable real-world compromise, and that the forces of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, like the forces of Likud

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and Kach, had every reason to regard it as a defeat. I'm telling the story in this way not to emphasize my own paltry role but to show how the temptations of the "moderate" world view can operate in the mind of one who believed himself relatively immune.

The ensuing essays by Edward Said constitute, quite apart from their force and tenor as a polemic against a specific and ignoble deal, one of the great arguments against the "moderate" cast of mind. A lone individual, who might have done very well for him

self either by keeping silent or by playing along, and who had moreover recently been diagnosed as being gravely ill, chose instead to place the emphasis on unwelcome truth, on "what people do not want to hear." One of my earliest quarrels with Edward was about George Orwell. He may therefore not care for this particular compliment, but that, like so much else these days, is just too bad.

Consider merely the question of Gaza. If the Belgians or the Dutch or the British had ever dared run a conquered territory in this way, in the period after 1945, it can be hoped (and it may even be believed) that a torrent of international condemnation would have descended. Nobody has ever visited this part of the projected "Greater Israel" and come away with anything but the most de

cided revulsion. Having shamed themselves beyond description in this little strip of former Palestine, the Israeli authorities smilingly decided to make a present of it to their former subjects. I should here like to quote from an interview I conducted, in the

week of the White House handshake, with Ilan Halevi of the PLO delegation. (Mr. Halevi is a Palestinian Jew and was at the time the ambassador of the PLO to the Socialist International, as well as a strong sup

porter of the Arafat-Rabin accord.) "When they offered us Gaza as a beginning," he told me, "I suggested that we say, 'Sure. But what will you give us in exchange ?'" It may or may not be significant that the only decent Jewish joke to come out of the whole affair was told by a member of the PLO.

The offer was, in other words, always understood at some level as a sordid trap. On the day of the White House accords, I also dined with a senior American diplomat who had once had charge

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of Israel-Palestine negotiations. He told me of a previous occasion, when the late Gen. Moshe Dayan had suggested a "Gaza first" ploy. Instructed to wait upon Dayan and tell him that such an offer was too transparent by half, my vis-a-vis had found him not whit abashed. "Never mind," said the hero of 1967, "We'll still double cross that bridge when we come to it."

I suggest that you now turn to Chapter 7 of this collection and read Edward Said's discussion of the Gaza crisis. Note particularly his dialogue with Sara Roy, the probable world expert on the subject of this neocolonial slum. She is a Jewish researcher whose family was almost obliterated in the Poland of Hitler's "New Order." He is a Palestinian intellectual forced into exile in 1948 and domiciled these many years at Columbia University in New York. What you will learn about Gaza in this exchange is that rational people can see plainly what moderate people not only hide from their own sight (which might be reasonable) but also have agreed to hide from the sight of others (which is unconscionable).

Suppose we change the "moderate" designation of Mr. Rabin and Mr. Arafat for a moment, and merely for the sake of argument. What do we divine ? We divine two hardened veterans of a long and unsentimental nationalist struggle in which both have autho

rized and employed revolting methods in order to assert a more or less exclusive (and more or less religious) claim to the same Holy Land. Neither has as much as a useful decade left in him. Both are beset by factions and rivals. Both have become almost physically dependent upon American goodwill and approval. They make a bargain that gives both of them a chance to suck on the twin oxy-

gen tanks of the modernist politician-subsidies and prestige. Why blame them? But why drench them in praise and fervor and (most dubious of accolades) Nobel laureateship? This is not "a peace of the brave." It is a face-saver mounted by two exhausted opportunists for the benefit of their patrons.

If the real peacemakers were to meet, we would see telecasts of the discussion between Edward Said and Sara Roy. If the brave dissidents on both sides were to be honored for their internationalism,

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then the names of Professor Israel Shahak and Danny Rubinstein and Meron Benvenisti would be as well known as they ought to be. Throughout these pages, Edward Said draws attention to the work and the principles of these and other Israelis and Jews. He does not do so in the manner of one who craftily drops a Hebrew name to demonstrate his own breadth of mind. I can assert this much from my own knowledge: Edward Said was pursuing dialogue and rec-

onciliation with Jews and Israelis many years ago, and he engaged himself in political and physical risk in order to formulate, and see adopted, the Algiers Resolution of the PLO in 1988. He really does believe in mutual recognition. But, page by page, he here amasses the proof that the current agreement is neither mutual nor a recog-

nition. It is a parody and caricature of the ideal upon which some

rather decent people laid their lives.

The skeptic will-should-have his riposte ready. What about Hamas? What about those who never gave the agreement a chance and who celebrate the deaths of Israeli civilians? Here I need not quote Professor Said's own explicit repudiations of religious vio-

lence. I would refer readers particularly, though, to Chapter 15. Either one is prepared to "explain" or "understand" such monotheistic savagery or one is not. Unlike any regime in the region, and unlike many intellectuals in more peaceful climes and contexts, Said is not. I would add, on his behalf, that he wrote these disavowals and repudiations for Arab newspapers in a time and place when many were more prudent, or shall we say more "nuanced"? I also know, again from acquaintance and experience, that Said has defended the rights of Salman Rushdie at chaotic and unpredictable seminars in Cairo and on the occupied West Bank. I can think of many safely

domesticated Western intellectuals whose courage on this point (to say nothing of other points) has deserted them with less pretext.

But, of course, if Mr. Arafat is so eager to join the roster of minor Levantine and North African potentates, he becomes part of the problem of fundamentalism rather than the solution. No book can

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do everything or say everything, but it is my speculation that every line of Edward Said's political work, since at least 1967, has been explicitly concerned with preventing the replication among Palestinians of the banana-republic style and method that has become so dismally familiar in the Arab world. (See, very directly, Chapter 11, but also *passim*.) Yet, in the present cynical dispensation offered by the lordly to the powerless, even the word Bantustan seems inadequate as a description of the ghetto state into which the Palestinians are to be herded.

Bantustan, after all, was once a term of ultimate contempt for the grossest relegation and degradation. Yet now it serves to remind self-respecting Palestinians that even the former lands of apartheid are being transformed while they continue to welter in misery at the end of a flyblown queue. Worse still, this or deal is sanctified as part of a "peace process," a sort of reified, repetitive thing-in-itself which has lost any connection to original meaning. Not since Gen. Ariel Sharon's laying waste to Beirut in 1982 was described as part of the "Camp David process" has

there been such a brainless mangling of the language. (I should say that I used to think that Said was too uncritical of Arafat. It was when he returned from South Africa, having met Nelson Mandela, that he began to be more tough-minded.)

Before me is an essay by the Israeli historian Avi Shlaim in The New York Review of Books for June 8, 1995. He is considering This Side of Peace, a memoir by the charismatic Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi. Professor Shlaim is a brave and honest scholar who has done much to rescue the Palestinian past from defamation and propaganda. But he, too, makes himself prisoner of the wooden language that has imprisoned this discussion. Here he reviews the brilliant address (written by Dr. Ashrawi) with which Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi of Gaza opened the Madrid Peace Conference:

This was undoubtedly the most eloquent as well as the most conciliatory and the most convincing [speech]. It would have been inconceivable for the PLO, despite its growing

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moderation, to make such an unambiguous peace overture to Israel.

And again:

The peace process between the Palestinians and Israel, which culminated in the famous handshake between Yasir Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on September 13, 1993 ...

Shlaim admires Ashrawi greatly and concedes that she acknowledges the inspiration of Edward Said in the writing of her book. (No student of rhetoric or argument could have failed to notice the resemblance between this now famous speech and Said's essay "Per mission to Narrate," first published in The London Review of Books in 1994 and reprinted in his Politics of Dispossession [Pantheon, 1994]). However, this earns him (and us) an admonition:

Like Edward Said, Hanan Ashrawi understands the im

portance of Palestinians' telling their own stories; unlike him, she also understands the requirements of pragmatic politics, the necessity of compromise not only with one's enemies but also with one's partners. Both of them are intellectuals with a passionate commitment to the Palestinian cause, and both have considerable expository and oratorical skills. The difference is that Ashrawi can translate ideas into a plan of action.

The automatic terms conciliatory equals convincing equals moderation and results in peace process in the earlier extracts prepare us well for the lecture on realism in this one. Yet, as Shlaim goes on to concede as if nothing had happened, both Ashrawi and Dr. Abdel Shafi have become outspoken critics of Arafat's servile ministate in Gaza and have declined to participate in its structure and organization. Had they not declined, they might have been ex-

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eluded anyway since, as Shlaim further admits, "the self-styled President of Palestine had intended all along to follow the Algerian model, in which the politicians in exile had returned after independence to rule the country and had excluded from power the local leaders who had fought the French." And this is why Arafat's speech on the White House lawn was so empty and frigid; he had refused the services of Ashrawi and, imagining himself on the very threshold of global statesmanship, had elected to speak to power alone. "The next phase," Ashrawi was brusquely told, "is not one for poets and intellectuals. It's the era of hard-core politicians, one in which slogans are the weapons of a struggle for power. Self interest produces clichés, not humanistic visions."

Why, in that case, does Shlaim not commend Arafat over Ashrawi for his dogged commitment to compromise and pragmatism? Is it because, as Shlaim says later, "His administration has been set up in an area amounting so far to about 6.5 per cent of original Palestine. It is undemocratic and unpopular, and marked by growing repression"? Alas, this scholar does not have the vocabulary to decide what he means. What to do when

moderation tells you one thing and reason tells you another? (A better essay on the background to that tension is Said's tribute to the late Hanna Mikhail, Ashrawi's cousin, Chapter 1 1 .)

Hanan Ashrawi is fond of allusions to The Pessoptimist, a quasi folkloric creation of the Israeli-Arab novelist Emil Habibi (some times rendered as The Opsimist). Edward Said sometimes puts me in mind of this character too. With the vigilance of the exile, he interrogates each successive news bulletin, each newly returned traveler, and each leak from every camp. Mood swing is the dominant tempo of this activity; at one moment it seems as if democracy will break out in the Palestine National Council, but then a telephone call brings news of the replacement of yet another honest man by yet another timeserver. The Golan is to be returned! Rabin and Peres will discuss the question of refugee rights. But wait-it was all a cover for the same old "Jordanian option," with the Palestin

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ian leadership snubbed again. Even as I was writing this, in May 1995, the respected and principled Jerome Segal, one of the ornaments of the "mutual recognition" movement, launched a trial balloon in The Washington Post, predicting an Israeli concession on the "two-state" solution. (I have been present at many of the launchings of this balloon and hope to be present for many more.) For Palestinians, pessoptimism is a part of the survival kit, an essential ingredient in their summud, or stoicism.

It is entirely possible that Said is mistaken, and that the present neocolonial souk offers the only choice of buyable wares. It is not "unreasonable" to say that the Palestinians should have accepted the insultingly small space that was reserved for them in the Camp David Accords. Many things are thinkable once one has accepted that the Palestinians are a people with no right to determine their destiny, an inconvenient people who must be "taken care of" by others with larger dispensations in mind. But even that assumption would not excuse lying about basic facts and principles, or calling black white, or insisting that two and two did not make four. In the following pages, it is how the author thinks, and not what he thinks, that counts. And the how of his thinking is multiply imbricated with matters such as the importance of dignity, the



preeminence of the secular and the enlightened, and the need to tell the truth. In a Middle East that is almost denuded of independent freethinkers, it can hardly be argued that these qualities are too common or that they pose any sort of threat. We could use more of this style in our own hollowed-out public sphere, if it comes to that. Many readers know Edward Said only for his writing on literature and music. I myself have benefited enormously from talking with him about George Eliot and, more recently, about Joseph Conrad. To summarize this collection, then, let me annex a phrase of Conrad's, which he employed to praise the fighting spirit of his friend Cunninghame Grahame. Of this great critic of imperialism and inequality, Conrad said that he esteemed him for his "magnanimous indignations."

## Introduction

This is the first of my books to have been written from start to finish with an Arab audience in mind. In an abbreviated form, it appeared in Cairo in November 1994 as a collection entitled *Gaza Jericho: An American Peace*. These essays were originally written on a biweekly basis for *al-Hayat*, the leading Arabic-language daily edited in London but printed in every Arab capital, and they were also published in Cairo's *al-Ahram Weekly*. A few of them were also published in the French, British, Spanish, and Swedish press; only four, however, appeared in American newspapers and magazines. For this English-language edition, I have added several articles, plus one interview which was done after the publication of the Arab book, and a couple of articles on the United States intended for Arab readers; these may give a sense of what it is like to address an Arab audience unaccustomed to such views. All these pieces coincide with an extraordinarily dramatic and, in my opinion, tragic period in contemporary Palestinian and Arab history, from September 1993 to the summer of 1995, when the Palestine Liberation

Organization and then Jordan signed a declaration of principles and a nonbelligerency agreement respectively with Israel under the auspices of the United States. The tragedy is not that peace was achieved but that it was not, even though much of the Western

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media have celebrated the achievements of what has been called the American "peace process."

I was encouraged to publish an English-language version of this collection because of the poor coverage and misreporting of the Middle East peace process in the United States and Europe (the former is a good deal worse than the latter). Arab views are rarely encountered in the mainstream American media. For that reason there has been a unanimity in public discourse in the West that the peace process has been a good thing. When reports of torture and killings of Palestinians by Israeli and Palestinian police appear, they are connected with neither the deeply flawed Oslo Accords nor with an Israeli and, behind it, an American policy which has maintained hundreds of Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands, continues to deploy a major army of occupation, intransigently confiscates and builds on Arab land in East Jerusalem (as part of the city's forced Judaization), and resolutely denies Palestinians true freedom and national self-determination. These pieces are an individual attempt to keep providing the larger picture in the hope that more people will speak up and start to say that enough is enough.

My first piece, which appeared simultaneously in London's Guardian daily, al Hayat, al-Ahram Weekly, and The Nation, was the only Palestinian dissent against the noisy (but terribly dishonest) celebrations of the Oslo Accords. I have kept up a lonely struggle against the intellectual bad faith and governmental shortsighted

ness and opportunism that tried to convince the world that peace was finally at hand in the Middle East. Over time, I regret to say, my initial misgivings (described at length in Chapter 2, "The Morning After," published in al-Hayat on October 13 and 14, The

London Review of Books on October 21, and The Progressive in De

cember 1993) have generally been proved right, although the abuse against Palestinians continues.

It has not been easy to keep going. In the past I spoke out for peace and Palestinian rights and against Israeli practices. All of a sudden the major Palestinian leader, Yasir Arafat, signed an agree-

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ment with Israel (under United States sponsorship), and I found myself criticizing the so-called peace, as well as the PLO and its titular head. Besides, there was no ready constituency in either the West or the Arab world for views that questioned and steadily went counter to the ready mood of relief and supposed peace. In time, however, more and more readers were won over, and now, in the general despair and disrepair, people have at last begun to ask questions, express opposition, challenge the clammy embrace of

Arafat, Rabin, and their apparatchiks, enforcers, and sophists. My contention in this book is that from the secret negotiations in Oslo between the PLO and Israel to the Israeli-Jordanian agreement proclaimed in Washington, and after, there has run a clear and, to me, unnecessary line of Arab capitulation by which Israel has achieved all of its tactical and strategic objectives at the expense of nearly every proclaimed principle of Arab and Palestinian nationalism and struggle. Thus Israel has gained recognition, legitimacy, acceptance from the Arabs without in effect conceding sovereignty over the Arab land, including annexed East Jerusalem, captured illegally by war. Without declared international boundaries, Israel is now the only state in the world to be recognized as "legitimate and secure" by its neighbors: the formula is unprecedented. Always disunited and dithering, the Arabs have simply lost the will to resist. They now hope to gain acceptance from the United States and Israel by negotiations begun through an act of abjection that betrayed both the cause of liberation and the people Arabs, Jews, and others-who sacrificed their lives on its behalf. Though I live and write in New York, at a great distance from the Middle East, I have never been far away from the Arab world

in which I was born and grew up. In 1948 my entire family became refugees from Palestine. We lived variously in Egypt (where I spent my youth), Lebanon, Jordan, and the United States. Whether I wanted it or not, the fate of the exiled and dispossessed Palestinian people has been my fate too, although my circumstances have been very fortunate in comparison with those who are still stateless and

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under military occupation. On the other hand, I think it is also true that distance gives one a perspective and a certain freedom by which to see and judge matters that might be imperceptible or difficult to assess by those who live in the midst of rapidly unfolding events. I have always believed that there could not be a military solution to the Arab-Israeli, and in particular the Palestinian-Zionist, conflict. I sincerely believe in reconciliation between peoples and cultures in collision, and have made it my life's work to try to further that end. But true reconciliation cannot be imposed; neither can it occur between cultures and societies that are enormously uneven in power. The kind of reconciliation that can bring real peace can only occur between equals, between partners whose independence, strength of purpose, and inner cohesion allows them fully to understand and share with the other.

In the present situation Israel has managed to convince the Arabs, and in particular the exhausted Palestinian leadership, that equality is impossible, that only peace on Israeli terms and those dictated by the United States is possible. Years of unsuccessful wars, empty bellicosity, unmobilized populations, and incompetence and corruption at every level bled the life out of our societies, already crippled by an almost total absence of participatory democracy and the hope that goes with it. We must all take the blame for this colossal failure. Blessed with enormous human and natural resources, the Arab world has declined in production in nearly every sphere: during the last decade the gross national product has shrunk, agricultural output has grown smaller, reserves of money and resources have dwindled, and a whole series of civil wars (Lebanon, the Gulf, Yemen, Sudan, Algeria) have sapped much

of the vitality of our societies. Contemporary Arab contributions to the advancement of science and research are practically nonexistent, as they are to in international discourse in the humanities and social sciences. Our best writers, intellectuals, and artists are either silenced and tamed or imprisoned and in exile. Arab journalism is at an all-time low. Unpopular opinions are rarely expressed, and in nearly every soci-

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ety the media exist basically to further the regime's own version of reality. Yet no countries on earth possess more durable systems of government and power; they have resisted major changes for almost two generations. Little of this can be blamed on imperialism or Zionism. The big question for all of us to answer is, Why have we tolerated such an unacceptable state of affairs for so long? Not surprisingly then, Arab ruling elites, the Palestinians' included, have succumbed not so much to America but to the myth of America. I have often been shocked and amused to note how little "America" is really known in the Arab world at the same time that reams of attacks and analyses of America and the West provide Arab readers with large amounts of disinformation and crude misrepresentation. These have increased since the end of the Cold War. Moreover, it is assumed that since the United States is the only remaining superpower, we must accept its edicts and follow its pronouncements literally. Along with this there often goes a paradoxically blind hostility to the United States, as if America and Americans are reducible to extremely simple stereotypes. Regrettably, a slave mentality prevails among Arab leaders, for whom a favorable reception in Washington is the summit of their political lives. Little note is taken of how American politics and society actually function; even less is known about America's dealings with the Third World—where its record is positively disgraceful—or how its internal crises have a bearing on foreign policy. Thus the pax Americana envisaged by the Middle East "peace process" has been supinely accepted by the Arabs, without adequate coordination between them or real preparation for the details and outcome of the process.

It is amazing to me that what little is known about the United States rests on several invalid and finally inadequate assumptions. The main one is that U.S. policy is beneficial to the Arab people. Yasir Arafat, for example, persists in speaking of his "friend" Bill Clinton, even as (like all his recent predecessors) that "friend" sup

ports Israel unconditionally, has refused to condemn Israeli settler

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violence, and has not lifted a finger in favor of Palestinian (to say nothing of the PLO's) well-being. From late 1993 to early 1994, when Israeli troops partly evacuated and partly redeployed in Gaza, Congress voted \$180 million to assist Israel in those moves, in addition to the nearly \$5 billion given annually. Not only does America still officially consider the PLO a terrorist organization but it opposes Palestinian statehood and under Clinton has changed its policy to accommodate Israel's annexation of Jerusalem and the expansion of its over 200 illegal settlements. Official PLO assessments of Israel-whose prime minister is given endless certificates of confidence by the ever-pliant Arafat—are just as foolish and ill-founded. Yet there has never been a coordinated Arab in

formation and cultural policy aimed at addressing the American people, many of whom oppose their government's Middle East policy.

Nowhere have such incongruities been more in evidence than in Palestine, whose cause I served as a member of the Palestine National Council beginning in 1977. In 1991 I resigned from its ranks: I had just been diagnosed with a serious illness, but I had also felt that the terms we accepted for going to Madrid were disastrous. I had voted for the two-state solution at our 1988 Algiers meeting. I could see in 1991, however, not only that the gains of the intifada were about to be squandered but that Arafat and a few of his closest advisers had already decided on their own to accept anything that the United States and Israel might throw their way, just in order to survive as part of the "peace process." The major losses incurred by the misguided policies of the PLO leadership during the Gulf crisis, and by the constant mismanagement of funds and assets that were never accounted for, caused the PLO leadership in a panic to concede

every single national aim and legal principle to the so-called interim solution proposed by Yitzhak Shamir and seconded by George Bush and James Baker. We received no acknowledgment of self-determination, no certainty of future sovereignty, no right of representation, no mention of reparations (and this

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from a state which received billions of dollars from Germany for the Nazi Holocaust).

And if that was not bad enough, the Oslo Declaration of Principles celebrated on the White House lawn on September 13, 1993, was actually a good deal worse. For the first time in our history, our leadership had simply given up on self-determination, Jerusalem, and the refugees, allowing them to become part of an undetermined set of "final status negotiations." For the first time in our recent past, we accepted the division of our people-whose unity we had fought for as a national movement since 1948--into residents of the Occupied Territories and all the others, who happen today to constitute over 55 percent of the Palestinian population; they exist in another, lesser category not covered by the peace process. For the first time in the twentieth century, an anticolonial liberation move

ment had not only discarded its own considerable achievements but made an agreement to cooperate with a military occupation before that occupation had ended, and before even the government of Israel had admitted that it was in effect a government of military occupation. (To this day Israel has refused to concede that it is an occupying power.) We now also know that the Palestinian side had

no legal consultants to help it conclude a binding international agreement, that its tiny handful of secret negotiators were untrained, poorly educated, and unmandated "guerrilla" leaders who ignored Palestine National Council resolutions as they set about dismantling the whole structure of Palestinian resistance without a decent map, without any real command of the facts and figures, without any serious attention to what Israel was all about and what the Palestinian people's interest dictated.

Subsequent events and agreements have proved my views cor

rect, although I wish that I had been wrong. When it was announced, I considered the Oslo Declaration to be an instrument of capitulation, and when I was invited by President Clinton's office to attend the White House ceremony, I refused, saying that for all Palestinians September 13 ought to be a day of mourning.

Since

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that signing, the record speaks for itself. Of course we have failed as a people in our struggle to restore our rights. Israel has maintained its settlements and very partially redeployed its army. It controls land, water, security, and foreign policy for the Palestinian "self rule" authority. But what made the American peace process and its celebrations so vulgar and distasteful was that all along the Palestinian leadership has pretended that it won a great victory, and that its deal with Israel gave us real independence. When Israel still has the right to control exits and entrances to Gaza and Jericho, when it must approve all laws passed and appointments made, we can hardly speak of independence. How much more dignified and admirable it would have been to admit defeat and ask the Palestinian people to rally in order to try to rebuild from the ruins. In all this one imperative kept me at my desk: the need to tell the truth and not to let the language of hypocrisy, flattery, and self delusion rule. Most Palestinians, I am convinced, feel the utter indignity of our situation. Israeli soldiers prevent our people from traveling on what is supposed to be our territory, kill innocent civilians, torture prisoners to death, steal their land, imprison them, and destroy their houses and vineyards while Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres flaunt their new victories as successes of peace and humanity. But what has seemed to me most troubling is the absence of a language that is critical and responsible at the same time. Why do PLO representatives say one thing in private (for example, that Arafat is a megalomaniac) and its exact opposite on television? Why don't our intellectuals feel it their duty to tell the truth about the pitfalls of Gaza-Jericho and to say that we have signed an agreement that gives Israel control over our affairs with our cooperation? Perhaps too many of us have internalized the norms prevailing in most of the Arab world, that



you must always serve a master, that you must defend your patron and attack his enemy, and that you must be careful not to harm your chances of a good career and a handsome reward. Language has been degraded into slogans and clichés.

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the result of the moral and in

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To some extent, this insecurity is

intellectual penetration of our ranks by Israel and the United States, so that it becomes the goal of an Arab or Palestinian intellectual not so much to struggle for the independence of his or her people but to be accepted by Israeli politicians and academics, or to get a grant from the European community, or to be invited to a conference in Paris or New York. What one misses in current Arab and Palestin

ian culture is a moral and intellectual standard by which truth and falsehood can be distinguished and according to which intellectuals act regardless of profit or patronage. Perhaps the Islamic resur

gence with which I am not in sympathy speaks to that lack. The omens for the future are not good. Shortly after Yasir Arafat entered Gaza in early July 1994, it was reliably reported that five, or six, or maybe even seven intelligence services (many of them affiliated with the Shin Bet and Mossad) were reporting to him; since that time the number has increased to nine! People have been tortured to death. Newspapers have been closed. His opponents are being rounded up. And still he rules, and most of his people either endure that rule silently or try to get a position in it. His appointments have been an insult not just to the present but also to the past. He appoints his former ambassador to Tunis, a man whose office was penetrated by the Mossad in 1992, as overall coordinator of intelligence and security. The military commander of Jericho is the very man accused in 1982 for desertion and cowardice in South Lebanon. Reports of large-scale corruption involving various international crooks emanate from PLO headquarters. And, despite having himself signed every agreement he made with Israel, Arafat declares to the world that he is "frustrated" and "humiliated" by Israel. What did he expect when he signed an agreement with his people's

oppressor, and when he canceled that people's past and its future rights, as well as its present hopes?

Well-meaning critics have suggested to me that I have made my critique of the Palestinian scene too personal, and that I have unfairly concentrated on the personality and indeed the person of

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Yasir Arafat. Partly because of our history of being colonized, our tragedy as a people and as a movement is that we have few institutions, no civil society, no properly constituted process of accountability and redress. What we have instead is an all-powerful ruler who survives despite a seemingly unending record of failure. The major benefit of the Gaza-Jericho agreement is that it restored Arafat and a small band of cronies to relative power and authority; this may serve the peculiar purposes of the "peace process," but it does not serve Palestinian interests.

There are chaos and desperation in Gaza and Jericho today. Surely the Israelis are glad to be rid of Gaza (Rabin openly said that he wished Gaza would sink into the sea, so great were its problems, so unruly its people), crowing as they watch an ill-equipped, understaffed, woefully incompetent Palestine National Authority struggling unsuccessfully to keep hospitals open and supplied, pay teachers' salaries, pick up garbage, and so on. And all this with the same aging former feda'i totally in charge, unwilling to delegate authority, postponing elections, ranting and railing at the absence of money, leading to the demand that he safeguard Israel's security, crush his opponents, act as Gaza's new military governor.

I remain convinced that reforming Yasir Arafat is impossible. He fulfilled his functions as Palestinian leader until the September 13 signing, which is entirely his achievement and responsibility. There is no doubt that today Israel, the United States, the Europeans, and the Arabs need him: his presence in Gaza testifies to the durability of an agreement that ensures Palestinian dependence and subservience. That is why it has so much international support. Gaza may slowly acquire a successful separate independence, although in April 1995 Arafat

turned down Shimon Peres's suggestion that it be made an independent state. But now that Jordan has signed its own agreement with Israel, we can be certain that a tiny West Bank Palestinian protectorate or Bantustan, sandwiched between the two new allies, will be ground further and further down. Poverty and the absence of any sort of real independence will be its

continued fate, although ironically of course the Israelis hold Arafat responsible for enforcing the peace and for assuring the "security" of over 300,000 Israeli settlers (including those in East Jerusalem), many of them violent and abetted by the army in their crimes. In the meantime, according to Israeli figures, 20,000 more acres of Palestinian land have been expropriated or designated "security" areas since September 1993.

Other than that it seems obvious that the leadership that signed an agreement with the Israeli occupation really must remove itself, or be removed by some sort of election procedure. I believe it is impossible to argue or act on the flawed premise that these peace agreements with Israel represent a beginning on which we can build for the future. How can such agreements as the May 4 Cairo treaty succeed except in further legalizing Israeli control over the Occupied Territories? I agree that these agreements constitute a new reality, but what we now need is an open debate by all Palest

inians and concerned Arabs on the future of our region. I should think that non-Israeli and Israeli Jews, as well as Americans and Europeans with a commitment to real peace in the Middle East, ought to feed a part of that debate. We Palestinians must still recon

cile ourselves with our history, and with the perhaps futile sacrifices of the past century. And we must restore Palestine to its place not simply as a small piece of territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River but as an idea that for years galvanized the Arab world into thinking about and fighting for social justice, democracy, and a different kind of future than the one that has been imposed on it by force and by an absence of Arab will.

In a very modest way, therefore, this book is meant to stir up debate and to open up discussion. I am neither a political

scientist nor a prophet with a new vision. I would like, however, to try to say things that need to be said but have not been, and to ask questions that others, living close to the tumultuous events of the past two years, have been perhaps unable to raise.

I believe we need to connect, rather than forget, the years of sac  
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rifice and struggle with both the present and future. I should also like here to suggest that no society can go forward without ideas and values to guide it. It is simply not enough to say that we live in the New World Order, which requires "pragmatism" and "realism," and that we must shed the old ideas of nationalism and liberation. That is pure nonsense. No outside power like Israel or the United States can unilaterally decree what reality is, any more than a tiny handful of local leaders can say, Yes, those are our new ideas and we shall go along with them obediently. These are matters for intellectuals, concerned citizens, and partisans from within our society to contribute to, and if I have any hopes for this book, they are, first, that it will supply a truthful record of what the great changes in our area have wrought and, second, that it might serve as a starting point for a debate on our collective future.

Certainly the shape of that future is formed by American and Israeli power. The peace process will grant Israel what it has wanted from the Arabs, an unequivocal legitimacy as a state built on the ruins of an Arab society and, perhaps more important, an opportunity, with the United States, to enter and benefit from a vast new Arab market. There is much talk of a Middle East common market; of cooperation in joint ventures between Western capital, Israeli know-how, and Arab labor and consumer appetites. Trade

and tourism are touted as eradicators of barriers. Harmony and friendship, perhaps even a bit of democracy for the oppressed and downtrodden, are projected for the future. How all this is supposed to occur in a region where the wounds of war and conflict still fester,

where refugees stagnate in camps, where millions are denied the right to vote in meaningful elections, where women, the poor,

minorities, and the gifted are still treated as lesser human beings, and where the governments offer little inkling of how it is they are going to convert a culture of hostility and belligerence into one of peace and openness: all this is not talked about or debated.

As for Israel and the Palestinians, we can speculate as to whether their agreement can survive in its current form. Will Palestinians in

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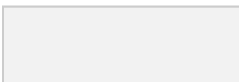
the Occupied Territories long endure the servility and incompetence of their leaders as well as the continued unfairness of an occupation regime and its vast web of colonial settlements? Can Arafat last in his people's eyes as simply another Arab despot, albeit one working hand in glove with the very state that destroyed his people's society and has enslaved and persecuted their survivors? Will the Gaza-Jericho enclaves collapse under the pressures of poverty and hopelessness? Will a new vision, a new leadership rise from Palestinian ranks to project renewed hope and determination? These are questions no one can answer now. But what we can say is that no scheme, no plan, no deal, no imposed "peace process," no matter how powerful, can completely destroy our alternatives. I feel that as Palestinians we must have faith in ourselves as a people with important resources of hope. And as Palestinians and Arabs we must remember



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# Peace and Its Discontents

I

## The PLO's Bargain

(September 1993)

The "historical breakthrough" announced recently by the PLO and the Israeli government is basically a joint decision to signal a new phase of reconciliation between two enemies; but it also leaves Palestinians very much the subordinates, with Israel still in charge of East Jerusalem, settlements, sovereignty, and the economy. Though I still believe in a two-state solution peacefully arrived at, the suddenly revealed peace plan raises many questions.

The plan is unclear in its details (no one seems fully to grasp all its aspects), plain enough in its broad outlines. All to the good, Israel and the PLO will recognize each other. Israel will allow "limited autonomy" and "early empowerment" for Palestinians in the Gaza strip and Jericho, a small West Bank town sixty miles away. Yasir Arafat is reported to be allowed a visit first and residence later; a few hundred members of the Palestinian Liberation Army, at present in Jordan, will be permitted to handle internal security, that is police work. Health, sanitation, education, the postal service, and tourism will be handled by Palestinians. The Israeli Army will reposition itself away from population centers, but will not withdraw for a while. Israel will control the land, water, overall security, and foreign affairs in these "autonomous" areas. For the

undefined future, Israel will dominate the West Bank, including

the corridor between Gaza and Jericho, the Ahenby Bridge to Jordan, and almost all the water and land, a good percentage of which it has already taken. The question still remains, how much land is Israel in fact going to cede for peace?

There has been much talk of vast sums for development: one prominent Arab daily reported that Arafat was bringing \$7 billion to the deal. The West Bank is supposed to get an additional \$800 million. The Scandinavian governments are said to have pledged considerable amounts for West Bank and Gaza development; Arab governments and the United States are expected to be asked for money, although given the unfulfilled promises of the past Palestinians are justifiably skeptical.

Clearly the PLO has transformed itself from a national liberation movement into a kind of small-town government, with the same handful of people still in command. PLO offices abroad—all of them the result of years of costly struggle whereby the Palestinian people earned the right to represent themselves—are being deliberately neglected, closed, or sold off. For the over 50 percent of the Palestinian people who do not live in the Occupied Territories—350,000 stateless refugees in Lebanon, nearly twice that number in Syria, many more elsewhere—the plan may be the final dispossession. Their national rights as a people made refugees in 1948, solemnly confirmed and reconfirmed for years by the UN, the PLO, the Arab governments, indeed most of the world, now seem to have been annulled.

All secret deals between a very strong and a very weak partner necessarily involve concessions hidden in embarrassment by the latter. It's true there are still lots of details to be negotiated, as there are many imponderables to be made clear, and even some hopes either to be fulfilled or dashed. Still, the deal before us smacks of the PLO leadership's exhaustion and isolation, and of Israel's shrewdness. Many Palestinians are asking themselves why, after years of concessions, we should be conceding once again to Israel and the United States in return for promises and vague improvements in the occupation that won't all occur until

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even then.

We have neither had an explicit acknowledgment from Israel that it is an occupying power nor an agreement to end the occupation, with its maze of laws and complicated punitive apparatus. Nothing has been said about the 14,000 political prisoners who remain in Israeli jails. We must put into whatever is going to be signed (no one is sure by whom) that Palestinians have a right to freedom and equality and will concede nothing from that right. Can the Israeli army march in at will; who decides and when? After all, limited "self-rule" is not something around which to mobilize or give long-term hope to people. Above all, Palestinians now must have the widest possible say in their future as it is largely about to be settled, perhaps irrevocably and unwisely. It is disturbing that the National Council has not been called into session, and that the appalling disarray induced by Arafat's recent methods has not been addressed.

Two weeks ago the only really independent members of the PLO Executive Committee, Mahmoud Darwish and Shafiq al Hout, resigned in protest; a few more are said to be considering the move. Hout said that Arafat had become an autocrat whose personal handling of Palestinian finances was a disaster and, worse, accountable to no one. I am aware of no more than a handful of people including Arafat who, with scant legal background or experience of ordinary civilian life, holed up in Tunis, hatched these decisions affecting almost 6 million people. There has been no consultation to speak of, and no coordination with Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. In the territories, the occupation has been getting worse, and this after ten rounds of fruitless negotiations. When I was there this past summer no one I spoke to failed to make the connection, blaming Arafat and the delegation members in equal measure. Then in July three leading negotiators resigned, bewail

ing Arafat's undemocratic methods, implying that while they bled themselves dry with the Israelis, Arafat had opened up a secret channel for his own negotiations. They were subsequently brought

back into line, leaving their fellow negotiator, the respected Gaza leader and delegation head Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi to issue state



ments calling "for reform and democracy."

With the PLO weakening and in disarray and conditions in the territories abysmal, there never was a worse internal crisis for Palestinians than the one that began this past summer—that is, until Arafat gave in to the Israeli plan. In one stroke, Arafat has been propelled on to center stage again, and the Israelis are rid of an unwanted insurrectionary problem, represented by Gaza, that Arafat must now work at solving for them. I admire those few Palestinian officials who bravely concur that this may be the first step toward ending the occupation, but anyone who knows the characteristic methods of Yasir Arafat's leadership is better advised to start working for a radical improvement in present conditions.

Of course no political settlement of a long and bloody conflict can ever fit all the circumstances. To be recognized at last by Israel and the United States may mean personal fulfillment for some, but it doesn't necessarily answer Palestinian needs or solve the leadership crisis. Our struggle is about freedom and democracy; it is secular and, for a long time—indeed, up until the last couple of years—it was fairly democratic. Arafat has canceled the intifada unilaterally, with possible results in further dislocations, disappointments, and conflict that bode poorly for both Palestinians and Israelis. In recent years Arafat's PLO (which is our only national institution) refused to mobilize its various dispersed constituencies to attract its people's best talents. Now it may try to regain the loyalty and compliance it expects before it plunges into a new phase, having seemed to mortgage its future without serious debate, without adequate preparation, without telling its people the full and bitter truth. Can it succeed, and still represent the entire Palestinian nation?

Guardian, September 9, 1993

Al-Ahram Weekly, September 9, 1993

Al-Hayat, September 11, 1993

The Nation, September 20, 1993

Now that some of the euphoria has lifted, what emerges from the Israeli-PLO agreement is a deal that is more flawed and less favorable for the Palestinian people than many had first supposed. The vulgarities of the White House ceremony, the degrading spectacle of Yasir Arafat thanking everyone for what, in fact, was the suspension of most of his people's rights, and the fatuous solemnity of Bill Clinton's performance-like a twentieth-century Roman emperor shepherding two vassal kings through rituals of reconciliation and obeisance—all these only temporarily obscure the truly astonishing proportions of the Palestinian capitulation. So first of all let us call the agreement by its real name: an instrument of Palestinian surrender, a Palestinian Versailles. What makes it worse is that for at least the past fifteen years the PLO could have negotiated a better arrangement than this modified

Allon Plan, one not requiring so many unilateral concessions to Israel. For reasons best known to the leadership it refused all such previous overtures . . . In the late 1970s, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance had asked me to persuade Arafat to accept Resolution 242 with a reservation to be added by the PLO (accepted by the United States) which stipulated an insistence on the national rights of the Palestinian people, as well as Palestinian self-determination. Vance said that the United States would immediately recognize the PLO

and inaugurate negotiations between it and Israel. Arafat categorically turned the offer down, as he did similar offers. Then the Gulf War occurred, and because of its disastrous positions then, the PLO lost even more ground. Except for the resolutions of the

Palestine National Council (PNC), the gains of the intifada were squandered away, and today advocates of the new document say, "We had no alternative." The correct way of phrasing it is, "We had no alternative because we either lost or threw away a lot of others, leaving us only this one."

To go forward in the march toward Palestinian self-determination -which has a meaning only if freedom, sovereignty, and equality, and not perpetual subservience to Israel, are its goal-we need an honest acknowledgment of where we are, now that the interim agreement is about to be negotiated. What is particularly mystifying is how so many Palestinian leaders and intellectuals persist in speaking about the agreement as a "victory." Nabil Shaath has called it one of "complete parity" between Israelis and Palestinians. The fact is of course, as ex-Secretary of State James Baker said in a TV interview, that Israel has given up nothing, except a bland acceptance of "the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people." Or as Israeli "dove" Amos Oz reportedly put it during a BBC interview (September 14, 1993), "This is the second biggest victory in the history of Zionism."

Arafat's recognition of Israel's right to exist carries with it a whole series of renunciations: of the PLO Charter; of violence and terrorism; of all relevant UN resolutions, except 242 and 338, which do not have one word in them about Palestinians, their rights, or aspirations; by implication, the PLO set aside numerous other UN resolutions (which with Israel and the United States, the PLO is now reportedly undertaking to modify or rescind) that have given Palestinians refugee rights since 1948 including either compensation or repatriation. In the past, the Palestinians had won numerous international resolutions including those passed by the EEC, the Non-Aligned movement, the Islamic Conference, the

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Arab League, as well as the UN, which disallowed or censured Israeli settlements, annexations, crimes against the people under occupation.

It would therefore seem that the PLO had ended the intifada,

which embodied not terrorism but the Palestinian right to resist, even though Israel remains in occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The primary consideration in the document is Israel's security, with none for the Palestinians from Israel's incursions. In his September 13 press conference Rabin was straightforward about Israel's continuing control over sovereignty; in addition, he said, Israel would hold the River Jordan, the boundaries with Egypt and Jordan, the sea, the land between Gaza and Jericho, Jerusalem, the settlements, and the roads. There is nothing in the document to suggest that Israel will give up its violence against Palestinians or compensate the victims of its policies for forty-five years, as Iraq was required to do after it withdrew from Kuwait after an eight month occupation.

Neither Arafat, nor any of his Palestinian partners negotiating with the Israelis in Oslo, has ever seen an Israeli settlement. There are now over 200 of them, principally on the hills, promontories, and strategic points throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Some may shrivel and die, but the largest are designed for permanence. An independent system of roads connects them to Israel and creates a disabling discontinuity between the main centers of Palestinian population: The actual land taken by these settlements, plus the land designated for expropriation, amounts-it is guessed-to over 55 percent (and more according to some estimates) of the total land area of the Occupied Territories. Greater Jerusalem alone, annexed by Israel, comprises a huge amount of virtually stolen land, at least 25 percent of the whole. In Gaza the settlements in the north (three), the middle (two), and the south along the coast from the Egyptian border past Khan Yunis (twelve), comprise at least 30 percent of the Strip. In addition Israel has tapped into every aquifer on the West Bank and now uses about 80 percent of the water there

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for the settlements as well as Israel proper. (There are probably similar water installations in Israel's Lebanese "security zone.") So the domination (if not outright theft) of land and water resources is either overlooked in the case of water, or postponed in the case of land, by the Oslo accords.

What makes matters worse is that Israel holds all of the

information on settlements, land, and water, and hasn't shared most of this with the Palestinians, any more than it has shared the inordinately high taxes it has imposed on them for twenty-six years. There have been all sorts of technical committees set up for such questions by the PLO in the territories (in which non-resident Palestinians have participated) but there is little evidence that committee findings (if any) were made use of by the Palestinian side in Oslo. So the impression of a huge discrepancy between what Israel got and what the Palestinians conceded or overlooked remains unrectified.

I doubt that there was a single Palestinian who watched the White House ceremony who did not also feel that a century of sacrifice, dispossession, heroic struggle, had finally come to nought. Indeed what was most troubling was that Rabin in effect gave the Palestinian speech, whereas Arafat pronounced words that had all the flair of a rental agreement. Far from being the victims of Zionism, the Palestinians saw themselves characterized before the world as its now repentant assailants, as if the thousands killed by Israel's bombing of refugee camps, hospitals, schools in Lebanon, its expulsion of 800,000 people in 1948 (whose descendants now number about three million, most of them stateless refugees), the conquest of their land and property, its destruction of over 400 Palestinian villages, the invasion of Lebanon, to say nothing of the ravages of twenty-six years of brutal military occupation, were reduced to the status of terrorism and violence, to be renounced retrospectively or dropped from reference entirely. Israel has always described Palestinian resistance as terrorism and violence, so even

in the matter of diction it received a moral and historical gift. In return for exactly what? Israel's recognition of the PLO, un-

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doubtedly a significant step forward. Beyond that, by accepting that land and sovereignty are being postponed till "final status negotiations" the Palestinians in effect have discounted their unilateral and internationally acknowledged claim to the West Bank and Gaza: these have now at most become "disputed territories." Thus with Palestinian assistance Israel has been

awarded at least an equal claim to them. The Israeli calculation is that by accepting to police Gaza-which Begin tried to give to Sadat fifteen years ago-the PLO would soon fall foul of local competitors, of whom Hamas is only one. Moreover, rather than becoming stronger during the interim period, the Palestinians will grow weaker and more under Israeli control, and thus less able to dispute the Israeli claim when the last set of negotiations begins. But there is an absence of any specified mechanism of how to get from an interim status to a later one. Does this mean ominously that the interim stage may be in effect the final one too?

Israeli commentators (for example, Uzi Benziman, *Haaretz*, September 3) have been speculating that in a matter of six months the PLO and Rabin's government will negotiate a new agreement further postponing elections, thus allowing the PLO to continue to rule. It is also worth mentioning that at least twice during the past summer Mr. Arafat has said that his experience of government consisted of the ten years that he "controlled" Lebanon, hardly a comfort to the many Lebanese and Palestinians who recollect that sorry period. Nor is there any concrete way now at hand for real elections to be held should they even be undertaken. The imposition of rule from above, plus the long legacy of the occupation, have not contributed much to democratic, grass-roots institutions. There are some unconfirmed reports in the Arabic press (for example, *Al-Hayat*, September 1993), that the PLO has already appointed ministers from its own inner circle in Tunis, and deputy ministers from among trusted residents of the West Bank and Gaza (Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi turned down one such offer). Will these ever open up, involve, into more truly representative institu

tions? One cannot be very sanguine given Arafat's absolute refusal to share or delegate power, to say nothing of the financial assets he alone knows about and controls.

Regarding both internal security and economic development, Israel and the PLO are now supposed to be working together. PLO members or consultants have been meeting with Israeli officials since last October (see *Boston Globe*, September 17,

1993), to discuss security problems, including Arafat's own security. And this at a

time of the worst repression of Palestinians under Israeli military occupation. The intent of this particular collaboration is to silence

or deter the Palestinian man or woman who might want to demonstrate against the occupation, which will continue given that

Israeli troops will redeploy, not totally withdraw. Besides Israeli settlers will remain and live, as they always have, under different laws,

ruled by the army. The PLO will thus become Israel's enforcer, an unhappy prospect for most Palestinians. Interestingly, even after it won political recognition, the ANC always refused to supply the South African government with police officials until after power was shared, precisely in order to avoid appearing as the white gov

ernment's enforcer. It was reported from Amman a few days ago that 170 members of the Palestine Liberation Army, now being trained in Jordan for police work in Gaza, have refused to cooperate for precisely the same reason. With about 14,000 Palestinian

prisoners in Israeli jails--most of whom Israel says it may release--there is an inherent contradiction, not to say incoherence, in the new security arrangements being made. Will more room be made in them for Palestinian security?

The one subject on which most Palestinians agree is development, which is being described in the most naive terms imaginable. The realities are considerably more complicated.

The world community will be expected to supply the nearly autonomous areas with large-scale financial support; the Palestinian diaspora is expected, indeed preparing, to do the same. Yet all development for Palestine must be funneled through the joint Palestinian-Israeli

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Economic Cooperation Committee, even though, according to the document, "both sides will cooperate jointly and unilaterally with regional and international parties to support these aims." Israel is the dominant economic and political regional power of course; in addition its power is enhanced by its alliance with the United States. Over 80 percent of the West Bank and Gaza

economy is de

pendent on Israel, which is likely to control Palestinian exports, manufacturing, and labor for the foreseeable future. Aside from the small entrepreneurial and middle class, the vast majority of Palestinians are impoverished and landless, subject to the vagaries of the Israeli manufacturing and commercial communities which employ Palestinians as cheap labor. Almost certainly most Pales

tinians will remain as they are, economically speaking, although now they are expected to work in the private sector, partly Palestinian controlled service industries, including resorts, small assembly plants, farms, and the like.

A recent study by Israeli journalist Asher Davidi (MERIP, no. 184, September/October 1993) quotes Dov Lautman, President of the Israeli Manufacturers' Association: "It's not important whether there will be a Palestinian state, autonomy, or a Palestinian-Jordanian state. The economic borders between Israel and the territories must remain open." With its well-developed institutions, close relations with the United States, the aggressiveness and drive of its economy, Israel will in effect incorporate the territories economically, keeping them in a state of permanent dependency. Then Israel will turn to the Arab world, using the political benefits of the Palestinian agreement as a springboard into Arab markets, which it will also exploit and is likely to dominate.

Framing all this is the United States, the only global power, whose idea of the new World Order is based upon economic domination by a few giant corporations and pauperization for many of the lesser peoples (even those in metropolitan countries) if necessary. Economic aid for Palestine is being supervised and controlled by the United States, bypassing the UN, some of whose agencies

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like UNRWA and UNDP are far better placed to administer aid to the Palestinians. Take two recent examples, Nicaragua and Vietnam. Both are former enemies; one, Vietnam, actually defeated the United States but is now economically in need of it. A boycott against Vietnam continues and the history books are being rewritten so as to show how the Vietnamese sinned against and "mistreated" the United States for the latter's idealistic gesture of



having invaded, bombed, and devastated their country. Nicaragua's Sandinista government was attacked by the United States-financed Contra movement; the country's harbors were mined, its people ravaged by famine, boycotts, and every

conceivable type of subversion. After the 1991 elections; which brought a United States supported candidate, Mrs. Chamorro, to power, the United States promised many millions of dollars in aid, of which only 30 million have actually materialized. In mid-September 1993 all aid was cut off. There is now famine and civil war in Nicaragua. No less unfortunate has been the fate of El Salvador. In sum, to throw oneself as Arafat has done on the tender mercies of the United States is almost certainly to ensure the fate the United States has meted out to rebellious or "terrorist" peoples it has had to deal with in the Third World, after they have promised not to resist the United States any more.

Hand in hand with the economic and strategic control of Third

World countries that happen to be close to, or possess, necessary resources like oil for the United States, there is also the media, whose reach and control over thought is truly astounding. For at least twenty years, Yasir Arafat symbolized the most unattractive and morally repellent man on earth. Whenever he appeared in the media, or was discussed by it, you could not imagine him without the single thought that he was supposed always to be entertaining: kill Jews, especially innocent women and children. Within a matter of days, the "independent media" had totally rehabilitated Arafat. He was now an accepted, even lovable roly-poly figure whose courage and realism had bestowed on Israel its rightful due. He

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had repented, he had become a "friend," and he and his people were now on "our" side. Anyone who opposed, or criticized what he had done was either a fundamentalist like the Likud settlers, or a terrorist like Hamas. It became nearly impossible to say anything except that the Israeli-Palestinian agreement—mostly unread or unexamined, mostly unclear, minus dozens of crucial details—was the first step toward Palestinian independence.

The problem of the media, so far as the really independent

critic or analyst is concerned, is how to free oneself from the ideological system which both the agreement and CNN now serve. Memory and skepticism (if not outright suspicion) are requisites. Thus even if it is patently obvious that Palestinian freedom in any real sense has not been, and is clearly designed never to be, achieved beyond the meager limits imposed by Israel and the United States, the fa

mous handshake broadcast all over the world is supposed a) to symbolize a great moment of success, and b) to blot out past as well as present realities.

Given a small modicum of honesty, Palestinians should be capable of seeing that the large majority of people the PLO is supposed to represent will not really be served by the agreement, except cosmetically. True, residents of the West Bank and Gaza are rightfully glad to see that some Israeli troops will withdraw, and that large amounts of money might start to come in. But it is rank dishonesty not to be alert to what the agreement entails in further occupation, economic control, and profound insecurity. Then there is the mammoth problem of Palestinians who live in Jordan, to say nothing of the thousands of stateless refugees in Lebanon and Syria. "Friendly" Arab states have always had one law for Palestinians, one for natives. These practices have already intensified: witness the appalling scenes of delay and harassment occurring on the Al lenby Bridge since the agreement was announced. There is no small irony in the fact that the new Palestinian bureaucracy is reportedly being trained in Egypt, surely the most deadly of all bureaucracies, one with a particularly unsavory record toward the


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130,000 Palestinians resident in the country since the late 1940s who must still make monthly appearances to the equivalent of a local parole board.

So what is to be done ? The first thing for Palestinians to do is to spell out not only the virtues of being recognized by Israel and accepted at the White House, but also what the major problems are. Pessimism of the intellect first, then optimism of the will. You can't improve a bad situation that is largely due to the technical incompetence of the PLO, which negotiated in English, a language that neither Arafat nor his emissary in Oslo knows,

with no legal adviser (the PLO's two main legal negotiators resigned in protest some time ago; Arafat and his three or four subordinates alone faced an entire corps of Israeli Foreign Ministry experts), until on the technical level at least you involve people who can think for themselves and are not mere instruments of a by now single Palestinian potentate. I find it extraordinarily disheartening that so many Arab and Palestinian intellectuals, who a week earlier had been groaning about Arafat's dictatorial ways, his single-handed control over money, the circle of sycophants and courtiers that have surrounded him in Tunis of late, the absence of accountability and reflection at least since the Gulf War, should suddenly start applauding his tactical genius, and his latest victory! The march toward self-determination can only be achieved by a people with democratic aspirations and goals, or it is not worth the effort.

After all the excitement celebrating "the first step toward a Palestinian state," we should remind ourselves that much more important than having a state is the kind of state it is. The modern history of the post-colonial world is disfigured by one-party tyrannies, rapacious oligarchies, economic ruin, the distortion of society caused by Western "investments," and large-scale pauperization through famine, civil war, outright robbery. Mere nationalism is not, and can never be, "the answer" to the problems of new secular societies. Potential statehood in Palestine is no exception, especially given so inauspicious a start, where alas one can already see the lin-

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ements of an unappetizing marriage between the chaos of civil war in Lebanon and the tyranny of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. To prevent such an eventuality, a number of quite specific issues need to be addressed. One of course is the diaspora

Palestinians, <sup>wh</sup> <? originally brought Arafat and the PLO to power, kept them there, and are now relegated to permanent exile or refugee status. Since they comprise more than half of the total Palestinian population, their needs and aspirations are not negligible, especially if, as has already begun to happen, their financial as well as political support is being solicited for Gaza and Jericho. A small segment of the exile community is represented by the various political organizations "hosted" by

Syria. A significant number of independents (some of whom like Shafiq al-Hout and Mahmoud Darwish resigned in protest from the PLO) still have an important role to play, not simply by applauding or condemning from the sidelines, but by advocating specific changes in the PLO's structure, trying to change the triumphalist ambience of the moment into something more closely resembling the realities, mobilizing support and building organization from within the various Palestinian communities all over the world for continuing the march toward self determination. These communities have been singularly disaffected, leaderless, indifferent, since the Madrid process began. One of the first tasks is a Palestinian census. It is interesting that Israel, the United States, and the Arab states have always opposed a census: it would give the Palestinians too high a profile in countries where they are supposed to be invisible and, before the Gulf War, it would have revealed to various Gulf governments how dependent they were on an inappropriately large, usually exploited, "guest" community. Above all, opposition to the census stemmed from the realization that were Palestinians to be counted altogether, despite dispersion and dispossession, they would constitute a nation, and not just a collection of people. Now more than ever, I think, the process of holding a census--and perhaps later even worldwide elections--should be a principle agenda item for Pales-

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tinians everywhere. It would comprise an act of historical and political self-realization outside the limitations imposed on them by the absence of sovereignty. And it would give body to the universal 'need for democratic participation, now ostensibly curtailed by Israel and the PLO in a premature alliance.


The question of return for those Palestinians who are not from the West Bank and Gaza would certainly once again be raised by a census. Although this issue has been compressed into the general "refugee" formula deferred until the final status talks sometime in the future, it needs to be addressed now. The Lebanese government, for instance, has been publicly heating up the rhetoric, fed by every faction in the country, against citizenship and naturalization for the 350,000-400,000 Palestinians in Lebanon,

most of whom are stateless, poor, permanently stalled. A similar situation exists in Jor

dan and Egypt (see Christian Science Monitor, September 28, 1993). In the meantime, Israel enjoys the Right of Return for every Jew in the world: they can become Israeli citizens and live in Israel at any time. This extraordinary inequity, intolerable to all Palestinians for almost half a century, has to be rectified. Certainly it is unthinkable that all the 1 948 refugees would either want to or could in fact re

turn to so small a place as a Palestinian state, but on the other hand it is unacceptable for them all to be told to "resettle" elsewhere, or drop any ideas they might have about repatriation and compensation.

One of the things the PLO and independent Palestinians should therefore do is to pose a question not addressed by the Oslo accords, thereby preempting the final status talks, namely, to ask for reparations for Palestinians. Although it is the Israeli government's wish (expressed quite forcibly by Rabin at his Washington news conference) that the PLO should close, in his words, "its so-called embassies"-a pattern already discernible in the string of many, now bankrupt, PLO offices around the world, hundreds of unpaid workers, deep discouragement and low competence in their performance-these offices should be kept open selectively so that claims such as those of repatriation, compensation, and reparations can be made and pressed.

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It is clear that we need to move up from the state of supine abjectness with which the Oslo accords were negotiated ("we will accept anything so long as you recognize us") and pursue parallel agreements with Israel and the Arabs that concern Palestinian national, as opposed to municipal, aspirations. But this does not exclude resistance against the Israeli occupation, which continues indefinitely. So long as occupation and settlements exist, whether legitimized or not by the PLO, Palestinians and others must speak against them. One of the issues not raised by the Oslo accords, the exchange of PLO-Israeli letters of recognition, the White House speeches, is whether the violence and terrorism renounced by the PLO includes non-violent resistance, civil disobedience, and so on. These are the inalienable right of any people denied full sover

eignty and independence, and must be supported.

Like so many unpopular and undemocratic Arab governments, the PLO has already begun to appropriate authority for itself by calling its opponents terrorists and fundamentalists. This is demagoguery. Hamas and Islamic Jihad are opposed to the Oslo agreement, but they have said several times that they will not use violence against other Palestinians. Besides, their combined sway amounts to less than a third of the citizens of the West Bank and Gaza. As for the Damascus-based groups, they seem either paralyzed or discredited (for obvious reasons). But this by no means exhausts the Palestinian opposition which, as Mouin Rabbani analyzes its various constituencies in an excellent article (Middle East International, September 24, 1993), includes well-known secularists, people who are committed to a peaceful solution to the Palestinian Israeli conflict, and who are realists and democrats. I include myself in this group which is, I believe, far bigger than is now supposed.

Central to the opposition's thought is the desperate need for internal reform within the PLO, which is now put on notice that noisy claims for "national unity" are no longer an excuse for incompetence, corruption, autocracy. For the first time in Palestinian history such opposition cannot, except by some preposterous and disingenuous logic, be equated with treason or betrayal. Indeed our

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claim is that we are opposed to sectarian Palestinianism and blind loyalty to the leadership; we remain committed to the broad democratic and social principles of accountability and performance that triumphant nationalism has always tried to annul. I think that the emergence of a broad-based opposition to the PLO's history of bungling and incompetence will emerge in the diaspora, but will also come to include people and parties in the Occupied Territories.

Lastly there is the confusing matter of relationships between Israelis and Palestinians who believe in self-determination for two peoples, mutually and equally. Celebrations are premature and, for far too many Israeli and non-Israeli Jews, an easy way out of the enormous disparities that remain. Our peoples are already too bound up with each other in conflict and a shared history of

percussion for an American-style pow-wow to heal the wounds and open the way forward. There is still a victim and a victimizer. But there can be solidarity in struggling to end the inequities, and for Israelis in pressuring their government to end the occupation, expropriation, settlements. The Palestinians, after all, have very little left to give. Now the common battle against poverty, injustice, and militarism must be joined seriously, and without the ritual demands for Israeli psychological security, which if they don't have now, they never will. More than anything else, this is the test of the symbolic handshake, if it is going to be a first step toward reconciliation and real peace.

Al-Hayat, October 13 and 14, 1993

London Review of Books, October 21, 1993

The Progressive, December 1993

The Politics of Dispossession, 1994

### 3

## Who Is in Charge of the Past and the Future ?

(November 1993)

One of the consequences of the PLO-Israeli Declaration of Principles and the accompanying documents on mutual recognition is a sudden shift in perspectives for which very few people are prepared. Of course these documents themselves do not yet constitute a full peace agreement nor, despite statements made by numerous dogmatic optimists, does an independent Palestinian state-with Jerusalem as its capital-actually exist. Nevertheless, there has been a considerable change in the atmosphere surrounding the struggle over Palestine, some of which is both comic and tragic at the same time. A few days ago at a poorly attended conference in Washington mounted by the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA)-a lobbying group

that purports to speak and act on behalf of "Arab" interests-former Secretary of State James Baker gave a remarkable speech, whose main point seemed to be that the top Palestinian priority today was not independence, state hood, or human rights but Israeli security. "If autonomy does not improve security for Israel," he said, "there will be no Palestinian autonomy."

For the past two decades one American administration after another has poured a total of over \$50 billion into Israel's security.

Baker's idea is that only by continuing to do this, with Palestinians

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adding their voices to the campaign, can the United States assure peace, and Israel's compliance with the agreement on principles it signed in Oslo. The facts of course tell a different story, that American support for Israel made possible the various invasions of Lebanon, the twenty-six-year-old occupation of Arab territory, and the continuing military superiority of Israel over all the Arab states. In addition the United States vetoed twenty-nine UN Security Council resolutions censuring Israel for its illegal settlements, its deportations, its contraventions of the fourth Geneva Convention: all this assured Israel of its "security" at the same time as it also assured Israel's imperviousness to the pressures of the international community.

Far from falling on entirely deaf ears, Baker's speech did get some affirmation among various Arab-Americans. James Zoghby, one of the most energetic, brilliant, and committed partisans of Palestinian rights, was quoted in the Christian Science Monitor as having said that continued aid to Israel was a priority for him. Without it, he explained, the peace process between the PLO and Israel was at risk. This surprised me, since Zoghby was one of the founders of the Palestinian Human Rights Campaign almost twenty years ago; long one of the targets of the pro-Israeli lobby, Zoghby now seems to be taking up a position that contradicts his earlier loyalties, and indeed explicitly aligns him with the numerous American-Jewish organizations whose main purpose is to se



cure American funds for Israel. When I spoke to him about this he said he had been "misquoted" by the Monitor: he then promised me an explanatory letter, which as of this writing I am still awaiting.

Similarly the National Association of Arab-Americans has been widely reported as giving a Washington luncheon for the Israeli Minister of Housing, Ben Elizar, who has some responsibility for the settlements and is certainly not known for his partiality toward Palestinians. Washington-based Clovis Maksoud (former Arab League ambassador) and Professor Samih Farsoun of American University were both invited but declined. The strong impression

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and the Future?

persists that both in Europe and the United States the PLO has begun to see its interests tied to Israeli interests; there has been no widespread or open discussion of this quite remarkable development, nor has a meeting been called by the PLO to discuss the new situation in the Occupied Territories as it affects diaspora Palestinians who--the financiers, engineers, economists, and physicians among them--are being solicited for help in reconstructing Palestinian life within the projected autonomy.

This takes us back to the radically opposed visions that the PLO and Israeli government have of the Oslo Declarations. From the Far East to Morocco, PLO leaders have been saying that what was achieved was a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Whereas both the actual documents themselves (has anybody both  
ered to read them?) and Israeli leaders say only that there will be a redeployment of troops; Israeli army chief of staff Ehud Barak stated in a Rosh Hashanah radio broadcast, "We are preparing for the redeployment of the forces in the Jericho area and the Gaza strip. As to all the rest of the places, our tasks have not changed, and everything continues as usual." Certainly the Israelis have the power to enforce their case and, it must be said, sketchy though they are, the Oslo accords tend to bear out their interpretation. The difficulties now being encountered by the Palestinian delegation in Taba are a sign (as if any were needed) that PLO and Israeli interests are not the same, and

really should not be acted on as if they were.

The larger problem is the PLO's current vision of itself, its own history, and its own goals. Many of us supported the PLO not only when it promised to liberate Palestine, but also when in 1988 it accepted partition and national independence for 22 percent of Palestine. The new Declaration of Principles is extremely short on anything resembling Palestinian rights, partial or full. Israel still refuses to apply the fourth Geneva Convention; it reserves authority for itself in areas of the Territories, according to its own terms, that provoke violations; the status of Palestinian refugees is un



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changed; there is no mechanism for redress for what the Palestinian Human Rights Information Center calls "past Israeli gross and systematic violations of human rights." In other words, Palestinians who still feel, as I and many others do, that the PLO as an institution should still represent the battle for Palestinian rights and self-determination also feel that it has overlooked or underestimated the need for continued vigilance and independence where Palestinian rights are concerned.

The Oslo Declaration, as well as the secret "security" meetings between FLO-delegated Yazid Sayigh and Ahmad Khalidi and Israeli officials a year ago, focused only on Israeli security for settlements and army in the Territories. Today the settlers can do what they wish since both the army and the Declaration of Principles protect them; on the other hand Palestinians are unprotected and their rights, to say nothing of their security needs, have been left in a kind of limbo, suspended or deferred pending further negotiations.

There has been a dramatic, if unacknowledged, transformation in the PLO's sense of identity. From being a partisan against Israeli actions it has now become a (perhaps unwilling) partner.

And this has had a decisive effect on our idea of our history. If

September 13, 1993 is viewed as the climax of history, then most of our rhetoric and actions in the past may now somehow seem to have been a

grand error, a sustained mistake for which we are now atoning and which we are beginning to correct. But has it really been our hidden ambition as a people to guarantee Israel's security, and to pressure the United States to continue to send it \$5 billion per

year in military and economic aid?

Unfortunately, to misread your own history is also to misread that of others. For can we say-and with what proof?-that Israel has always been looking for a way to safeguard Palestinian interests, and has now at last found it? Of course there has been a modification in Israeli behavior (partly because of Palestinian resistance) but we cannot assume that Israel has given up its past, its claims to

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sovereignty, its sense of itself, its Law of Return, and so on. Besides, the realities of everyday life, which so many of us are trying to improve for all (and not just West Bank and Gaza) Palestinians, are in effect a battle of opposed wills-<>urs and theirs.

Peace really means peace between equals; it means freedom and equality for both peoples, not just one, nor peace for one as a lesser appendage to the other, who has full rights and security. Above all it means understanding the coherence and integrity of our own his

tory as Palestinians and Arabs. The Zionist movement (though not every Israeli or every Jew) has always falsified our history, and a major part of our struggle has been to disprove the myths of our absence and of our non-independence. We acquired a modern political identity by virtue of that struggle, which is very far from over. Today our sense of our own history and past should be fuller, more critical, more insightful, not less. Above all, it should be written by us, not the American Secretary of State, nor the Israeli government. If we do not take charge of our history what future, if any, will be left for us to think about and implement?

Al-Hayat, November 12, 1993

## 4

### Facts, Facts, and More Facts

(December 1993)

As the weeks grind on it becomes clearer and clearer that a weak, unprepared and essentially divided Palestinian population is slowly being forced into positions on the ground that have already been prepared by the Israelis. Holding most of the cards--land, water, settlements, security, and, above all, Jerusalem--the Israelis are ne

gotiating the details of the Oslo accords from a posture of consolidated strength. In Cairo the security committees have hit numerous snags, all of them the result of belated Palestinian efforts to challenge Israeli control, which was of course conceded in Oslo. These committees have been meeting in secrecy principally, I believe, to hide the weakness, lack of coordination, and absence of preparation of the Palestinians, who face Israeli experts armed with facts, files, and power that have no equivalent on the other side. We have been unable so far even to undertake a census of our own people. We rely on Israel for facts about land and water, and to this day have rarely produced our own sources of reliable information. Is there an accurate and usable Palestinian map of the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem?

More and more Palestinians are discouraged, now that the money hasn't come, that the news of PLO incompetence, autocracy and corruption emerges daily, that the brutalities of the occupation (to say nothing of uncoordinated Palestinian resistance) seem to in

crease as the days go by. Wherever one goes there are

complaints ☐

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about the absence of alternatives (are we ruled by predetermined fact so totally?) and the need for "constructive" criticism. A large obstacle seems to be our historical inability as a

people to focus on a set of national goals, and singlemindedly to pursue them with methods and principles that are adequate to these goals.

Since the beginning, the struggle over Palestine has been a battle over territorial sovereignty: "another dunum, another goat" was the motto of the Zionist settlers under Chaim Weizmann. Israel is now in sole possession of the territory of historical Palestine, although of course a relatively large population of Palestinians-including the 800,000 Palestinian citizens of Israel-is also resident there. The Zionist idea has always been to coordinate specific concrete steps with a guiding principle which rarely changes. Thus the Israelis assert sovereignty and they build settlements: they take land and water, build roads, deploy armed forces, and they proclaim their wish for peace. The Arab technique has always been to make very large general assertions, and then hope that the concrete details will somehow work out later. Thus the PLO accepted the Oslo Declaration of Principles on the grounds that Palestinian autonomy would

somehow lead to independence if enough rhetorical statements about an independent Palestinian state were made; but when it came to negotiating the details (for instance, what parts of Jericho and Gaza were in question?) we had neither the plans nor the actual details. They had the plans, the territory, the maps, the settlements, the roads: we have the wish for autonomy and Israeli withdrawal, with no details, and no power to change anything very much. Needed: a discipline of detail.

A general idea like "limited autonomy" might certainly lead either to independence or it might equally well lead to further dependence and domination. In either case, however, the main task for Palestinians is to know and understand the overall map of the territories that the Israelis have been creating, and then devise concrete tactics of resistance. (In the history of colonial invasion maps are always first drawn by the victors, since maps are instruments of conquest. Geography is therefore the art of war but can also be the

art of resistance if there is a counter-map and a counter-strategy.) The essence of the Israeli plan for territorial

control, both in theory and in detail, is a) total control over the land within its pre-1967 boundaries and b) prevention of real autonomy of the Palestinian inhabitants of the Occupied Territories by maintaining an ever expanding united Jerusalem as the core of a web extending into the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli plans for and practices in Jerusalem are therefore the central challenge facing Palestinians.

Jerusalem has never been the focus of a concentrated Palestinian strategy, nor has there ever been a campaign systematically to resist Israeli control over the city and its surroundings; "Gaza-Jericho" thus seems even more like a trap or a kind of elaborate distraction, so that Palestinian energies will be absorbed in controlling and administering the peripheries, while the core is left to the Israelis. As described by the Dutch expert Jan de Jong, the idea is to surround the whole of Jerusalem by two rings of settlements (one, Ramot, Neve Yacov, Talpiot and Gilo; two, Rekhes Shujat and Har Homa, where building is now taking place), one enclosing the other; in area this comprises most of the central West Bank from Bir Zeit in the north to the outskirts of Hebron (al-Khalil) in the south. Within this very large area Israel will largely be unchallenged, although there and elsewhere in the Territories autonomy will be allowed "in separate territorial units." The whole of the West Bank and Gaza is thus already divided into ten or eleven cantons, with corridors running from Jerusalem to the east and south for settlements and roads-all controlled by Israel-cutting between them. There has even been a proposal to build a new city of 300,000 called al-Quds near Hizma (well beyond the two circles). It has been suggested that this will be offered to the Palestinians as a substitute for the real Jerusalem.

De Jong's main point, however, is that whereas the Israelis are planning, settling, and controlling, the Palestinians have still not developed a strategy to resist these moves, whether by collective public building projects or by making metropolitan Jerusalem the center of a plan for independence. In both instances, since the Is

raeli vision is to divide the Palestinian population into "islands,  
Facts, Facts, and More  
Facts



cantons, small spheres of containment," de Jong suggests that the response Palestinians "should consider themselves part of a larger unit," of which Jerusalem is not just Shari Salah ai-Din and Sultan Suleiman Street, but a city "from Al-Azzariah to the Beit-Hanina Shufat area, [where they] can think how to make a prospect for development there." To discuss that as an alternative, with visible efforts made "on its behalf, will cause people to believe in it," and can then become the basis for collective, as opposed to individual, action.

There has been much talk recently of experts and professionals being brought in to assist the PLO in creating the infrastructure of a Palestinian state. The idea seems to be that expert opinion on matters to do with development and planning is objective, knowl-

edgeable and less inclined to be political in the narrow sense. More over these prescriptions for return and development are seconded by the World Bank, the European Community, and the United States, whose view is that the PLO should turn over its rule to accredited experts who would act according to sounder norms than would a national authority. I must confess to being relatively unmoved by these arguments. The current plight of countries like Egypt and India, to say nothing of numerous Latin American and African countries, is that development has been dictated from the outside, with the World Bank and the IMF acting as agents of the United States to promote a so-called free market; the net result of this has been to pauperize the majority and keep those countries even more politically and economically dependent on the developed countries, for whom the Third World is a source of vast new

markets, cheap labor, and relatively inexpensive resources. There has been a mistaken idea, fostered by both Israel and the PLO since September 13, that security and prosperity now ought to flow for both parties. Nothing could be further from the truth. Israel has pursued a vigorously repressive policy in the West Bank and Gaza, and it has greatly expanded its diplomatic and commercial links with significant non-European countries like China, Indonesia and, according to the Israeli press, Iraq. On the Palestinian

side, the euphoria has now faded almost totally, with deaths, injuries, and imprisonment finally convincing most people that the golden age has not yet arrived. The recent student elections at Bir Zeit University, in which the pro-PLO nationalists lost to Islamist candidates, underscore the point. No money has yet been seen, and the prospects of large-scale prosperity (from large-scale donations) seem increasingly dim. Meanwhile Yasir Arafat travels around the world, the Mossad has penetrated his offices, and his lieutenants and courtiers either squabble with each other or try to look for quick deals on their own.

There is very little in the present situation that experts who sit in Washington or Paris can fix: a plan drawn up by the most brilliant and yet distantly located intellect cannot actually be implemented unless there is a common national will, as well as a common na

tional sense of urgency and mobilization. The Arab world, Europe, and the United States are literally filled with extraordinarily large numbers of gifted and successful Palestinians, who have made a mark in medicine, law, banking, planning, architecture, journal

ism, industry, education, contracting. Most of these people have in fact contributed only a tiny fraction of what they could contribute to the Palestinian national effort. Compared with the Jewish communities in the West we have done nothing, although I am convinced that there is a great potential there. Perhaps the greatest failure of the PLO was not that it signed an ill-considered and stupid declaration of principles, but that it has failed, both before and after Oslo, to mobilize the vast potential of its own people. Most Palestinians today are either disaffected and confused, or they are impossibly optimistic and unrealistic. So the problem is not one of expertise, development, or money, but of focus and concentration.

As an alternative to the present disarray, with our leadership desperately holding on to its eroding authority while 500 schools, and eight universities, plus 10,000 employees in the education sector in the Occupied Territories languish without a budget and no guidance at all (to say nothing of hospitals without medicine), the notion of getting hold of the real facts seems like a good one. Pales-



tinians today are separated by geography and by Israel's designs in keeping us fragmented and isolated from each other; people in Palestine and those outside it lead different lives, with far too little communication between them. To survive as a nation it is not enough to repeat slogans, or only to insist that Palestinian identity will survive. The first thing is to grasp as concretely and as exactly as possible what the facts on the ground really are, not in order to be defeated by them, but to invent ways of countering them with our own facts and institutions, and finally of asserting our national presence. If Jerusalem is the heart of our predicament, it is also therefore the heart of the solution. As the settlement process continues, the Palestinian people must muster the resources and the will to concentrate on seeking to prevent unilateral Israeli control. But this can only be done collectively, and by a people who are mobilized down to the last man, woman, and child. This requires commitment, honesty, and competence. Otherwise it seems to me we will go the way of other native peoples, destroyed by a relentless foe, or absorbed and coopted into schemes controlled by others. Each Palestinian must ask whether enough energy and effort have been expended, not by someone else, but by oneself.

In other words, the immediate need is to start thinking collectively and to stop reacting individually. And the major question, of which Jerusalem is the symbol, is how to resist, not how to profit. The Israelis must be pushed off the Palestinian land they now occupy illegally in Jerusalem and their West Bank and Gaza settlements, yet they can only be pushed off by a people that to a man and woman feels itself to be part of a national effort dedicated to doing so. Those are the facts. There is no such thing as partial independence or limited autonomy. You are either politically independent or you are not. If not, the facts indicate neither sovereignty nor real freedom, and certainly not equality with an Israeli Jewish state that destroyed Palestine in 1948 and is not anxious to give it another chance in 1993. The challenge is obvious.

## The Limits to Cooperation (Late

December 1993)

Almost immediately after the 1967 war various groups of individual Arabs and Israelis in the West began to explore ways of relating to each other that were not based uniquely on opposition and underlying enmity. I particularly recall a public meeting that took place at Harvard University in February 1993, during which Israelis and American Jews (such as Shimon Shamir, later Israeli ambassador to Egypt and now its first ambassador in Jordan, and Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a leading American liberal Zionist) encountered various Arabs and one Palestinian (myself) resident in the United States; the purported aim of the conference was to try to explore ways of getting beyond hostility toward some sort of mutual recognition and understanding. The Arab and Israeli students who organized the conference worked together as a group of young friends motivated idealistically by visions of Arab-Jewish cooperation, but for those of us closer to the immediate realities, the occasion was one to put extremely divergent viewpoints to the other side, with the aim of getting one's opponent to admit moral injustice.

I mention the Harvard meeting only because it was the first in a long series of such meetings, dialogues, seminars that took place from those days until the present. As the official Arab and Israeli positions remained opposed, these more or less private meetings

broke new ground, seeking unofficially to bring the opposed parties closer together. Over the years I attended several similar meetings, although with one exception (a conference at my own university, Columbia, in March 1989) I stopped doing so after 1986. To the best of my knowledge no one on the Palestinian side has published a systematic study of these encounters, which were held in Europe, North America, and, much less frequently, in the Middle East. For after Anwar Sadat's trip to Jerusalem in 1977, Palestinians were more involved than other Arabs. "Peace" was always the subject discussed, and participants ran the spectrum from known members of the PLO to independents and distant supporters. Most were intellectuals rather than politicians, however, and almost all—including myself—were convinced that only a political, as opposed to military, solution to the conflict in Palestine would yield results.

The PLO was usually aware of these often secret meetings. Ever since the 1977 Cairo meeting of the PNC where Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), a Fatah higher-up, delivered a memorable lecture on the need to distinguish between various schools of Zionist thought, there has always been a special Palestinian interest in cultivating the acquaintance and, in time, support of liberal Zionists; many of them, like Yossi Sarid, Yael Dayan, Yeheshofat Harkabi, Matti Peled, and Uri Avineri, were also keen on developing relationships with the PLO. These Israelis came from different backgrounds and had different goals in mind of course, but all of them were Zionists, some more politically ambitious and militant than others. Many were moved by genuine remorse and a desire to make amends to Palestinians; many were also in search of new roles, and even careers, for themselves.

One thing the PLO and individual Palestinians rarely did, however, was to include non-Zionist Israelis in their efforts, people like Professor Israel Shahak, a courageous and brilliant intellectual who without compromise or personal ambition singlehandedly fought against Israeli policies toward the Palestinians. He was ob-

viously considered too marginal, and unlikely to be effective in determining policy, although it would have been a splendid illustration of political principle had he been acknowledged as being of importance to the Palestinian struggle. Similarly when it came to European and American Jews, it was always the people closest to the Israeli Labor party who were sought out, never intellectuals like Noam Chomsky, whose political principles forbade any deals with the Israeli or American Jewish establishment.

For the PLO, one very obvious goal was to break down Israeli and Palestinian restrictions against dealing directly with representatives of the other side. In the beginning this was accomplished by encouraging nationalist independents (like myself) to have face-to-face meetings with Israelis. The idea was to accustom Israelis to Palestinians (and vice versa) who were neither terrorists nor fanatics, but reasonable people with reasonable goals such as peaceful co-existence. In addition—and this is something I myself was particularly interested in doing—many of us thought of face-to-face discussions with Israelis as an opportunity to force them to confront a history, people, and narrative that their state and its official propaganda had both obliterated and systematically misrepresented. Spending time with them or appearing in public together was therefore a kind of resistance, purely verbal and intellectual, to the ravages of military occupation and dispossession. And it — must also be said these dialogues were educational for the Arabs as well: we learned about them, how they thought and interacted with each other, what they said about us and our national claims.

Yet after the PLO's exit from Beirut in 1982 an important series of changes took hold gradually and began to trouble a few of us, so much so that we either dropped out completely or began to feel more reluctant about participating. Here I can only speak for myself. In the first place I felt it was always Israelis, Americans, or Europeans who initiated and sponsored the dialogues, rarely Arabs or Palestinians, who neither had the organizations, nor the will, nor the foresight. In the United States, Peace Now and its various sup-

porters were extremely active about setting dates and agendas, contacting participants, arranging for expenses; but so too were the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers), the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, several research institutes and private foundations. The net result of all this activity was that the Arabs involved always felt themselves to be part of something they neither controlled nor fully understood.

In the second place, we never coordinated among ourselves, and so far as I know, we never developed a mechanism for reporting, assessing, or cumulatively developing a strategy for these encounters. Certainly if such a mechanism existed in PLO headquarters in Tunis, I never had anything to do with it, my opinion was not sought, and I never reported to anyone. On the other hand some of us gradually became aware of this larger Israeli and U.S. agenda of which we were a part. One element of it went under the name of "conflict resolution," a relatively new academic field that bridged the gap between psychology and politics. A leader in the field is Professor Herbert Kelman of Harvard University, who more than any single individual was and still is active in promoting seminars and meetings--most of them private-between Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans.

Although I participated in Kelman's meetings (and still consider him a friend) I nevertheless withdrew after 1986. He is undoubtedly an idealist who believed that some, but by no means all, of the problems separating Israelis and Palestinians went back to difficult ties of perception, psychological barriers, and decades of misapprehension and misrepresentation. Therefore for years he undertook to gather these antagonists together under his supervision in order to explore and then to dissipate the misunderstandings and barriers. But there was always some governmental interest in what he and others did who sponsored dialogues of this kind. Often there were U.S. State Department officials present, one of whom I recall was the author of an article provocatively entitled "Foreign Policy According to Freud." One of the underlying assumptions seemed



false to me, that the struggle over Palestine was principally not a real or material one, but was largely the result of a perhaps

tragic, but certainly rectifiable, psychological misunderstanding. In any case I also felt that the idea of an American sponsor or referee who somehow stood outside the conflict and could either manage or ob

serve it calmly was also an ideological fiction. The U.S. has always been a rejectionist power whose one-sided support for Israel and

(until this day) refusal to support Palestinian self-determination made it our enemy. Anyone acting at the behest or with the encouragement of the U. S. government, no matter how idealistic or utopian, was in some way involved in that government's goals, which did not favor Palestinians but rather Israel.

The other problem that turned me against the meetings was that as the weaker, less organized party, the Palestinians could not really benefit from the uneven exchange. Israelis and Americans, on the other hand, could benefit in two ways. First they could get to know and to a certain extent penetrate Palestinian ranks by slowly changing our agenda from struggle and resistance to accommoda

tion and pacification. I have long supported a two-state solution based on the idea of peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine, but my beliefs are predicated on equality between the two peoples, with Palestinians enjoying the same rights-not lesser ones-currently available only to Israelis. I myself see no way of gaining these rights except by struggling directly to end Israeli occupation and dispossession of Palestinians. The thought that by working out an arrangement whereby the occupation might continue while at the same time a few Palestinians and Israelis could nevertheless cooperate on a friendly basis, struck me as false and misleading.

Can one imagine endorsing similar discussions between a few well-intentioned German and French intellectuals during the occupation of France ? Only with great difficulty, but something like this scenario kept resurfacing in the seminars and dialogues, and the Israelis always attached conditions to their recognition of

Pales-

tinian rights and the end of the occupation. For years we were told "recognize Israel and Resolution 242" or "change the

Charter." There was never any effort made to reciprocate by changing the Law of Return or asking for even the partial demilitarization of Is

rael. The concessions were most often made by us. We were usually put in the position of being asked to allay the Israeli sense of insecurity, as if the destruction of our society by Israel, the continuing persecution of our people, and the killing of thousands of us did not provide sufficient grounds for nourishing our sense of insecurity.

The second way that Israel and the United States benefited from the seminars and dialogues was that they revealed the extent to which Palestinians-disorganized, poorly led, unmobilized were ready to concede more and more of their strategic goals to something that later came to be called "the peace process." Madrid was the culmination of years of an eroding Palestinian position. Another way of putting this is to say that we were all affected by the underlying capitulation of the PLO, which after 1982 gradually came to see itself not as a liberation movement but as an independence party willing in the end to settle for municipal, as opposed to national, authority.

It was only after the secret talks in Oslo were made public that I was able to see how the principle of so-called (but always secret) dialogue, not resistance and struggle, really had become the main technique of the PLO leadership. In reality then what the present leadership had had in mind from the beginning, and for which so many intellectuals had perhaps inadvertently paved the way, was that it could gain something in Palestine from Israel by conceding most of its history and claims in advance to Israel. On the one hand, the intifada proved that active resistance could have a positive effect on Palestinian will and morale; on the other hand, you could say in private to the Israelis, yes, but we are prepared to live in peace with you if only you accept the principle of talking to us. As if talking to, and being recognized by, your enemy is your major goal. As if the principle of hard work, determination, and committed struggle



could be shortcut by throwing all your cards on the table in return for which Israel only conceded something called "limited auton

omy" and "limited recognition."

I am for dialogue between cultures and coexistence between people: everything I have written about and struggled for has pointed to that as the goal. But I think real principle and real justice have to be implemented before there can be true dialogue. Real di

alogue is between equals, not between subordinate and dominant partners. That is why I am disturbed both by the history I have just narrated and by the extraordinary haste in which cooperation between Palestinians and Israelis is now being urged. It would therefore be a serious mistake for intellectuals and political leaders to take what in fact was a Palestinian capitulation in Oslo for a license to enter into various cooperative schemes (in culture, or research, or development)

with Israelis at this point. There is still a military occupation,

people are still being killed, imprisoned, and denied their rights on a daily basis. The main prerogatives for us as Arabs and Palestinians are therefore clear. One: we must struggle to end the occupation. Two: we must struggle even harder to develop our own independent institutions and organizations until we are on a relatively equal footing with the Israelis. Then we can begin to talk seriously about cooperation. In the meantime cooperation can all too

easily shade into collaboration with Israeli policy.

Yet I do not think that the present leadership of the PLO is capable of doing anything about either of these two goals. Yasir Arafat and his various lieutenants are far too compromised in their "deal" with Israel for the first, far too dependent and submissive in their outlooks for the second. Indeed the PLO has become Israel's captive, dragged from one unmet deadline to another, trying retrospectively but fruitlessly to rectify the concessions it granted at Oslo, finding itself more and more enmeshed in a process whose end is the end of the PLO as an independent national authority.

I am also concerned about Palestinian and Arab intellectuals for whom meetings such as the one convened in Granada in early De-



ember (1 993) by UNESCO (and briefly attended by Shimon Peres and Yasir Arafat) are still attractive. To them I should like to say that the culture of peace for which we all struggle cannot be achieved together with even well-meaning citizens of an occupying power. Our first responsibility is to our own people: to raise the level of unity and resistance, to establish self-reliant institutions, to be clear about what we are for and how we aim to get there. Little has been more demoralizing to the cause of Palestinian self

determination than intellectuals whose premature compromises on matters of principle have made the word "peace" synonymous with giving up before getting anything.

Al-Ahram Weekly, December 30, 1993

Al-Hayat, January 7, 199<sub>4</sub>

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### Time to Move On

(January 1994)

The crisis in the Palestinian ranks deepens almost daily. Security talks between Israel and the PLO are advertised as a "break through" one day, stalled and deadlocked the next. Deadlines agreed to by both Israel and the PLO come and go, with no other timetable proposed, even as Israel actually increases the number of its soldiers in the Occupied Territories, as well as the killings, the building of even more settlement residences, the punitive measures keeping Palestinians from leaving the territories and entering Jerusalem. Israel has the leverage to do what it wishes, whereas the PLO can only complain or refuse to sign documents it agreed to a day earlier.

As for the PLO leadership, it is wined and dined in London and

Paris, while in Gaza and elsewhere leaders resign, its cadres grow more disaffected. No one has anything but complaints about this leadership, so much so that numerous petitions, missions (such as the one led by Haidar Abdel Shafi to Tunis) and articles in the press keep up a fairly constant pressure on Yasir Arafat to reform, change his autocratic ways, open up the decision-making process to talent and proven ability.

A major part of the current crisis can be traced back to the Oslo Declaration of Principles itself. Once described as a breakthrough



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document, it has now been revealed as an interpreter's nightmare, a patchwork of old Israeli and American drafts, incomplete procedural suggestions, deliberately ambiguous half-hints and half obfuscations. In one section the Israeli army agrees to withdraw; in another it is characterized as only redeploying. It would make no sense to detail the many traps in the document, but two major points do need to be clarified.

One of course is that the PLO did in fact sign the document, so there is no use pretending that it can be rethought and renegotiated after the fact. Whatever else they are, the Israelis are literalists and they are serious about enforcing the PLO's compliance, no matter how loudly (and ineffectively) Mr. Arafat complains about being betrayed. Acting on his direct orders, his organization signed the document and must now live with it.

Two is that although some perhaps well-intentioned Israelis talk enthusiastically about the onset of a Palestinian state, the Oslo document (as well as the Israeli government's numerous statements and declarations to its people, and its behavior in the Territories) says exactly the opposite. Moreover the facts bear out this depressing message: Israel has not even admitted that it is an occupying power, and through every one of its actions and statements has gone out of its way to make the likelihood of an independent Palestine more and more remote. For example, Rabin's government has just announced a \$600 million road system for the Occupied Territories; the system is to connect the

settlements to each other and to Israel, thus bypassing Arab areas and completing the Territories' can tonization under Israeli control. One is entitled to ask, if Israel has tacitly accepted the principle of Palestinian statehood, why does it say or do absolutely nothing to encourage such a prospect, especially since Mr. Arafat went out of his way not only to recognize Israel but to assure it of peace and security, with none in return for Palestine ?

This lopsided situation-all of it the result of unwise decisions made by Mr. Arafat and his hand-picked subordinates-is right fully drawing attention to the incapacity of the PLO's present pol-

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icy to remedy it. At the core of the problem is a series of misread ings and miscalculations promoted by Mr. Arafat and his support ers. First is the misguided notion that Yitzhak Rabin's Labor Party has changed, and now wants peaceful reconciliation with the Pales tinian people. This illusion goes back to the elections of 1 992, which were greeted by leading Palestinian intellectuals and strategists as a victory for peace, even though Rabin's record right up to, as well as after, the elections showed no real change, manifesting the same ar rogance, violence, and intransigence as the Labor Party. A recent

report by B'tselem, the Israeli Human Rights Organization, shows that in its first few months the Labor government took more lives (especially the lives of children) than any previous Likud govern ment. Indeed every "moderate" Israeli establishment politician banked on by Palestinian intellectuals and strategists (including the doves of Peace Now or Meretz) has always voted or acted against Palestinian rights whenever it counted; these so-called moderate Is raelis kept on asking the Palestinians for concessions to make them more "credible" politically, after which they never budged from the overall consensus. To this day the real national consensus refuses the very idea of Palestinian sovereignty and independence. And as I said, even a cursory look at Rabin's record reveals no substantial change in his attitudes or practices. For him and his associates in

government "peace" means Palestinian subservience. Second is the wholly mistaken idea that more Palestinian flexi bility would

mean the probability of American friendship. Mr. Arafat's fatuous comment that he had a friend in the White House suggests the woeful ignorance of a mind untrained in the rudiments of contemporary history. The United States is more allied with Israel, and with Israeli occupation practices, than ever before. There is not one single thing done by Mr. Arafat's White House friend-not one, and I defy anyone to name one-to assist Palestinians, except that he invited Arafat to the White House on September 13 to sign an instrument of surrender. Otherwise the United States continues to oppose Palestinian self-determination,

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as it always has. One further sign of American "friendship" for Palestinians is the change in the official U.S. characterization of the Occupied Territories; according to Warren Christopher these are now regarded as "disputed territories." Israel still receives over \$5 billion in annual American aid, and the United States has said not a word about the worsening of Israeli occupation practices since the spring of last year.

Third is the PLO's calamitous misreading of the Arab countries' reaction to the "peace" arrangements it made with Israel in Norway. The Arabic press has recently been full of accounts of how Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, to name only three, have continued to regard the Oslo Declaration with great misgivings. All three countries are crucial to Palestinian politics. Each has a large, extremely vulnerable population of Palestinian refugees whose destiny for the foreseeable future has become extremely problematic (to put it mildly). Under U.S. and Israeli pressure the situation in the Middle East has been changed irrevocably, with leaders and governments in these three countries forced to make crucial decisions that affect their long- and short-term national interests.

The least that might have been expected of the PLO was some modicum of coordination with these governments. Instead the three countries were left out of the picture deliberately, and thereby forced to make of Oslo what they could. Worse yet, whenever the situation (that is the economic agreements with Jordan) called for responsible and serious negotiations, the PLO carried on in a most insouciant, even insulting, manner. Certainly

it is true that Pales

tinian and Arab interests do not necessarily coincide, and that as a group the Arab states are mercurial (not to say unreliable) interlocutors. But Palestinian interests require, indeed dictate, greater care and precision than the PLO has shown toward Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Must Egypt always be the only Arab country with influence on the PLO?

Finally, the present PLO leadership has so misunderstood its own people that there is now open discontent more or less everywhere-