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Middle East Report, No. 164/165, Intifada Year Three (May - Aug., 1990), 24-28+71+78.

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Women wait to see their sons and husbands in Ansar II prison, Gaza.

Tordai

Women, the Hijab and the Intifada

Rema Hammami

Many accounts have suggested that the intifada has enabled Palestinian women to make great strides towards their social as well as political liberation. While some positive developments have occurred, it is also true that the intifada has been the context for a vicious campaign in Gaza to impose the *hijab* (headscarf) on all women. The campaign included the threat and use of violence and developed into a comprehensive social offensive. Social acquiescence, political inaction, family pressure and a concurrent ideological transformation created a situation in which only a few committed women in Gaza, one year into the intifada, continued not to wear a headscarf. These women were affiliated with the three leftist factions and, although acting individually, were all asserting within the context of the intifada the fundamental linkage between gender liberation and the possibility of a progressive and democratic future.

Their struggle, then, was not against the *hijab* itself but about what the intifada would lead to. While they struggled on a daily basis to maintain their right to choose and their right to a better future, they received little support from either progressive men or the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), who waited one and a half years before addressing the *hijab* campaign.

The Hijab in Gaza

Before the intifada, in Gaza as elsewhere in the Middle East, there was wide variation both in the forms of *hijab* worn and in its use or non-use by women of different social classes and groupings. The various forms of *hijab* signified class, regional

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background, religion or age. These forms and meanings are fluid, and since 1948 there has been an ongoing appropriation, transformation and reinvention of various traditions of clothing and headcovering.

While class transformations in the late 1950s led large numbers of women to dispense with any form of *hijab*, others continued to wear changed versions of it up through the present. The dress and headcovering of older camp women in Gaza asserts both their peasant origins and their contemporary status as camp women. Its primary function is to signify a class/group identity rather than a gendered one. In everyday life, camp women from both north and south wear a black cotton skirt (*da'ir*) and a white or black shawl (*shasha*). They adopted these after 1967, when materials for the traditional southern Palestinian dress were no longer available. Many of these women are against the forced imposition of the *hijab* but do not view their own dress as oppressive. Their generation did not have access to the socioeconomic structures that entailed the wearing of "modern dress"; their point of reference remained the older women's culture of the camps. Their dress has escaped the wider recent ideologization of the *hijab* and remains simply an assertion of their membership in their communities.

In the late 1970s, new Islamic movements, most notably al-Mujama' al-Islami (an Islamic group whose members consider themselves heirs to the original Muslim Brothers and now call themselves the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas), sought to impose or, as they saw it, "restore" the *hijab* on women in Gaza who were not wearing any form of headcovering—mainly educated, urban and petit bourgeois women. The Mujama' endowed the *hijab* with new meanings of piety and political affiliation. Women affiliated with the movement started to wear long, plain, tailored overcoats, known as *shari'a* dress, which have no real precedents in indigenous Palestinian dress. Supposed to represent a return to a more authentic Islamic tradition, it is in fact an "invented tradition" in both form and meaning.¹ Here the *hijab* is fundamentally an instrument of oppression, a direct disciplining of women's bodies for political ends. The form itself is directly connected to a reactionary ideology about women's role in society and a movement that seeks to implement this ideology.

Inventing Tradition

While *shari'a* dress proliferated in Gaza in the 1980s, pressure to wear it remained site-specific—for example, at the workplace, within religious families or among students at the Islamic University campus. *Shari'a* dress and the ideologization of the *hijab* created a new awareness about the differences in the way women dressed, but social space continued to exist for women not to wear any form of *hijab*. Only during the intifada was this social pressure transformed into an active campaign to impose the *hijab* on all women. By December 1988, one year after the intifada erupted, it was almost impossible for women to walk around Gaza without wearing some form of headcover.

Although Gazans are often referred to as inherently conservative, their religious history is no different from that of the rest of Palestine. Local saint shrines and popular religious festivals constituted the central forms of religious practice for both indigenous Gazans and refugees through the 1950s.² Support for the Mujama' stems from more recent social upheavals, during the Israeli occupation.

The Mujama's emergence as a political force in the 1970s and 1980s was actively encouraged by the occupation authorities, but this cannot totally account for its growth.³ When the movement arose, it offered a model of society and social behavior relevant to the problems of the majority of poorer residents in Gaza. The daily migration into Israel of more than half of the work force had profound effects on Gazan society.⁴ Drug abuse and alcoholism were perceived as major problems intertwined with the experiences of Gazan workers in Israel. Elements of the left had initially tried, sometimes forcibly, to stop workers from going into Israel, but this only created resentment because they proffered no alternatives. The Mujama' proposed a practical solution—a return to a moral social code as embodied in their interpretation of Islam. They appealed to a common cultural experience and selectively used values and meanings from Gazans' everyday lives. This was attractive to many Gazans, even to those who would never join the movement. Those who joined were attracted by the possibility of participating in a political community that claims to confront the occupation without (until very recently) exposing its members to danger—as in the nationalist factions. Finally, the Mujama' was operating in a context of little religious diversity, and where secularism was a recent and weak force.

No one really knows how many active supporters the Mujama' has in Gaza. Secularists maintain that were a headcount possible, people would be shocked by how few their numbers are. What is evident to all is the extent to which the Mujama', through a mixture of consent and coercion, has established a kind of cultural dominance over Gaza. Its power falls short of total hegemony: thus far it has succeeded only in putting secular culture on the defensive without generating political legitimacy for itself. As one Gazan put it: "Their main activities in Gaza are to keep demonstrators away from mosques and to make sure women are covering their heads."

The lack of initial widespread political support for the Mujama' is due to its poor record in fighting the occupation. Although foreign press reports have been full of simplistic assertions about the "Islamic nature" of the intifada in Gaza, it was the nationalist groups (including the Islamic Jihad) who were at the forefront of mobilizing the population in the first months of the uprising. During the spring of 1988, the Mujama' emerged as Hamas and joined the fray on its own terms.⁵ It called for its own strike days, distinct from the Unified Leadership, published a manifesto and soon started calling on women to wear the *hijab*. Graffiti sprung up all over the Strip with statements such as, "Daughter of Islam, abide by *shari'a* dress!" In May 1988 religious youths broke into classrooms and demanded that schoolgirls wear the *hijab*.

September 1988 marked the first attempt to deal with the growing pressure on women to wear a headscarf. A group of

youths attacked girls at the Ahmad Shawqi school in Gaza City for not covering their heads. Other *shabab* (activist young men) caught and interrogated the attackers and concluded that they were lumpen elements being used by the military authorities as agents provocateurs. A local attempt was made to deal with the incident and one nationalist group issued a *bayan* (political manifesto) describing the incident and warning of Israeli attempts to sow discord. Hamas also issued a local *bayan* disassociating itself from the attackers. But neither the leaflets nor knowledge of the incident were widely circulated. At that point, activist women in Gaza realized that national action was needed to reverse the unconscious local acceptance of "hijabization" as part of the intifada. "It [the *hijab*] is not an issue for me," said one woman in the village of Abassan. "In my community it's natural to wear it. The problem is when little boys, including my son, feel they have the right to tell me to wear it."

Redefinition

The dynamics of the *hijab* campaign are hard to delineate, because multiple forces worked simultaneously (though not necessarily jointly) to confront women at every turn with demands to wear a headscarf. In Gaza it started with religious youths writing graffiti, then breaking into girls' schools and making speeches. Next, young boys (between 8 and 12) who were empowered by the intifada joined the campaign. If there were no soldiers to throw stones at, women without headscarves made good targets. Politically unaffiliated *shabab* who felt left out found harassing these women a safe way to express nationalist sentiment. Simultaneously, soldiers were raiding homes and attacking women; families became worried about their daughters, and husbands about their wives.

What was most problematic for many women in Gaza was that this social pressure accompanied an attempt to "nationalize" the *hijab*. Original arguments ascribing the *hijab* with religious meaning were all but swept away by its new intifada signification. The *hijab* was promoted (and to some extent became understood) as a sign of women's political commitment, as women, to the intifada. The most prominent redefinition made wearing a headscarf a sign of respect for the martyrs. By this logic, "bare-headed" women became considered vain and frivolous or, at worst, anti-nationalist. Another nationalist argument was that the headscarf was a form of cultural struggle, an assertion of national heritage. Because these nationalist redefinitions were not completely successful, arguments based on immediate fears were resorted to—the *hijab* protects women from soldiers.

The reality is somewhat different. Perhaps before the intifada, soldiers might have been more cautious about attacking women, but casualty statistics indicate that soldiers do not discriminate along age or gender lines, and certainly not on the basis of the headscarf. Nevertheless, this last argument has become somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy; the few women in Gaza who have resisted wearing the *hijab* now stand out as political activists and are, at least visually, more a target for the military.

The fact that soldiers have attacked and killed women regardless of their dress has led to the argument that wearing a headscarf will stop the incident from bringing shame on the family. Thus political crimes against women become transformed into sexual ones.

The final argument resorted to was the most honest—wearing a *hijab* will protect women from attacks by religious youths. At this point it becomes clear that this "intifada *hijab*" is not about modesty, respect, nationalism or the imperatives of activism but about the power of religious groups to impose themselves by attacking secularism and nationalism at their most vulnerable points: over issues of women's liberation. Many women cite December 1988 as a watershed of the *hijab* campaign. By then it was a matter of total commitment for women not to wear the headscarf. Walking down a street meant dealing with a chorus of boys shouting "*tahajjabi*" (veil yourself!), often followed by a shower of stones. One woman from Shati Camp recounted:

I was always being harassed when I went outside without it. Once I got into a fight with some boys from the [bourgeois] Rimal neighborhood [in Gaza City] who told me to wear it and that I wasn't modest. I told them that they were cowards who spent their time telling women about modesty but never threw a stone at a soldier and never went near a demonstration. I told them that Rimali women wearing *hijab* were much less modest than I am—with their expensive colored silk long dresses and their faces covered in make-up. They said, "wear a kilo of make-up but put on a *mandil* [scarf]."

By the summer of 1989, a number of women who had actively resisted wearing a headcover started donning one in certain contexts, solely out of fear. They and other women who refused to wear the *hijab* understood that the campaign was about the type of political and social future the intifada would lead to. "Small things can have big consequences in the future," a woman from Nasr neighborhood in Gaza City remarked. "I don't wear the *hijab* because I don't want to live in an Islamic state."

Action on a national political level came in August 1989, after a series of incidents in July brought the issue to a head. First, there were signs that the *hijab* campaign was beginning to spread to the West Bank. For the first time, eggs and verbal abuse had been lobbed at women not wearing headscarves in parts of Jerusalem's Old City and in Hebron. This was compounded by a pivotal incident that has become part of Gaza women's national history.

Two activist women, wearing headscarves, were walking in one of Gaza City's main markets. A group of *shabab* who recognized them threateningly told them that their scarves did not completely cover their hair. (Both women were known to have actively resisted wearing the headscarf until recently.) One of the women defiantly said that if they tried anything she would protect herself. The men grew angry and she began to unzip her bag, claiming she had a knife. At this point the men shouted to the crowd that the women were collaborators and had a tape recorder in the bag. The crowd started to chase the women and herded them into a shop where the bag was searched and no recorder found. The men and the crowd dispersed. The women used the phone in the shop to call their local committee's *shabab*, who located one of the three young



Palestinians in Gaza's Jabalya refugee camp dance to celebrate a birth in the family.

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men who had threatened the women. He was interrogated and his accomplices found. They were "tried" by a popular committee and sentenced to apologize and pay a fine of 3,000 JD (\$4,500) to the women and their families.

The Hijab and the Unified Leadership

The next Unified Leadership *bayan* (#43) finally included a statement on the question of women and the *hijab*: "Let bygones be bygones. All disputes serve the enemy and its collaborators. The UNLU condemns the attacks by radical groups on Palestinian women in Jerusalem, Hebron and Gaza." The UNLU also issued a more elaborate statement as an appendix to *bayan* #43 in Gaza:

In this appendix we would like to raise the issue which has been at the center of many heated debates . . . The issue of women and their role. Woman as we perceive her, besides being a mother, daughter, sister or wife, is an effective human being and full citizen with all rights and responsibilities . . .

We specify the following points:

- 1) We are against excessive vanity in personal dress and use of cosmetics during these times. This is applied to the same degree for men and women.
- 2) We believe that any dispute outside the purview of the occupation and its various offices should be resolved and settled in a democratic way with any suggestions offered in the course of normal constructive discussion or advice.
- 3) We should value highly the role women have played in our society during these times in achieving our national goals and confronting the occupation and they should not be punished without cause.
- 4) The phenomenon of harassing women contradicts the traditions and norms of our society as well as our accepted attitudes about women. At the same time it denigrates the patriotism and humanity of each female citizen.
- 5) Nobody has the right to accost women and girls in the street on the basis of their dress or the absence of a headscarf.
- 6) The Unified National Leadership will chase these hooligans and

will stop such immature and unpatriotic actions, especially when it is found that many such hooligans consistently engage in their own suspicious activities.

Soon after, graffiti appeared on walls in Gaza proclaiming that "those caught throwing stones at women will be treated as collaborators" and that "women have a great role in the intifada and we must respect them." Leaflet #43 was followed by a statement from the Higher Women's Council, a forum for the four women's committees, which also blamed the Israeli authorities and collaborators for the attacks on women.

The specific incident in Gaza brought to bear both "traditional" and intifada mechanisms of conflict resolution. Due to the lack of an independent judiciary or police force, most internal disputes in Gaza have been handled through a form of *sulha* (mediation) between families by a respected political or religious figure. With the organization of popular committees since the intifada, much of this work has been done by *shabab*. The use of the *sulha* in this context has both positive and negative implications for women. On the positive side, the *sulha*, coming on top of the UNLU's statement, defines attacks on women as a social as well as a political crime. In this sense, it was also a political statement about social relations (as well as a financial deterrent). Some women, however, feel that the *sulha* only feeds into traditional conceptions of women by bringing in the women's families and treating the issue as a question of honor and the women not as political individuals but as family property.

The statement by the Unified Leadership had an immediate impact. In a matter of days the atmosphere in the streets changed dramatically, and women without headscarves no longer felt so threatened. Few men dared tell a woman to cover her head, and those who did could be accused of considering themselves greater than the Unified Leadership.⁶ The women had the power of the intifada on their side.

Although the UNLU's statement was important in stopping verbal and physical attacks on women by young men, it was incapable of reversing the overall effect of the campaign. Many women questioned why it had taken so long for the Unified Leadership to take a stand and why the Higher Women's Council did not act until after *bayan* #43 was issued. "When the *bayan* [#43] came out, I wasn't happy," said a woman in Beach Camp. "I was angry because it was so late. If they had done it months ago we wouldn't be where we are now . . . Once you put the *hijab* on, it's very difficult to take it off."

Indeed, because the Unified Leadership took so long to act, some women believed that there was tacit support for it. "I remember some women in the committee saying that they wore it [the *hijab*] because the UNLU didn't condemn it so therefore they must be for it," explained another woman from Beach Camp.

Why did the Unified Leadership take so long to issue a statement? Activist men told women in Gaza that either the UNLU saw the issue as too divisive or, even worse, as secondary. A number of activist women have a third hypothesis which, in some ways, was the motivating factor for their refusal to wear the *hijab*. They believe that certain elements within the Unified Leadership actually supported the *hijab* campaign, and that Fatah, in particular, was trying to form an alliance with religious groups.⁷ Fatah, they assert, has a poor record on women's rights and is the only faction that does not have a women's committee involved in anything other than traditional charitable work.⁸ Fatah could both undermine the leftist women's movement and start forging a link with the religious groups by supporting the *hijab* campaign. Activist women cite concrete evidence in the form of pro-*hijab* graffiti in Gaza signed by Fatah, including: "It is the duty of our women to observe the opinion of Islam."

This contention, however, does not change the fact that leftist and secularist men did not consider fighting the *hijab* an important, priority issue. Even security considerations of extreme secrecy and threat of imprisonment can not explain the length of time—a full year—it took for a *bayan* to appear on the issue. The inability (or reluctance) of activist men to deal with the *hijab* campaign represents both the weakness of the left and of feminist agendas in the West Bank and Gaza. It may also be that because men were not the direct victims of the *hijab* campaign, they did not understand its long-term and underlying implications.

Perhaps a reading of the appendix to *bayan* #43 offers more clues to both the time it took to address the issue and the reluctance of the left and secularists to deal with the issue on the ground. The leaflet's main priority is not to roll back the suppression of women but to arrest the potential for disunity caused by attacks on women. Further, instead of containing an active self-criticism, UNLU and the Higher Women's Council leaflets blame the attacks on women on the enemy—the occupation forces and their collaborators. The only remarks about traditional social norms are devoid of self-

criticism or responsibility. Worse, both statements claim that the acts "are foreign to our traditions and Islamic religion" or "contradict the traditions and norms of our society." Finally, both leaflets refer positively to religion in society—either explicitly, as Islam, or more generally as religious values. All this bespeaks a defensive and apologetic stance vis-à-vis the religious trend, and more specifically toward Hamas.

The extent to which the blame for the *hijab* campaign (at least for its more violent aspects) has been simply placed on the shoulders of the occupation forces and their collaborators remains problematic. While there is a long tradition of the Israeli security services using "modesty" to manipulate women prisoners and their families—especially to force confessions—neither the Unified Leadership nor the Higher Women's Council acknowledged the extent to which nationalist forces bought into the *hijab* campaign. The fact that religious groups promulgated it and that conservative elements in Palestinian culture oppose women's political independence was never adequately addressed. *Bayan* #43 dealt a blow to undemocratic processes and validated in words women's right to choose at a critical moment, but its title, "A Call for Unity," explains the absence of real self-criticism. Keeping the religious groups in the fray and the national consensus going was deemed more important than confronting sexism and reactionary elements. In the end, not only will women be the victims, but so will the left and secular forces.

Postscript

While *bayan* #43 initially had a strong impact in Gaza, since February 1990 the "*hijab* campaign" has been renewed with even greater force than before. Now that the imposition of the headscarf has been accomplished, a new goal seems to have been set: the imposition of the *jilbaab* (full-length dress or coat). Since March 1990, graffiti in Rafah and Khan Yunis (signed by either Hamas or Fatah) have been calling on women to wear *jilbaab*. One woman in Khan Yunis was attacked (some say knifed) for wearing a knee-length skirt. Two activist women in Rafah were attacked ostensibly for the same reason.

Women's initial fears about what the "*hijab* campaign" would lead to already appear to be validated. Some signs of things to come include an incident in April, when Hamas activists stormed a women's committee production project in Rafah and harassed its members. The women decided to stop the project until after Ramadan when, they hoped, things would be calmer. And in March, Hamas activists made pronouncements from a mosque in Beit Hanoun that women should not be allowed to go out without a male member of the family. Thus far the population is ignoring this call.

The only local attempt to deal with the situation to date came in the form of UNLU graffiti in Rafah that asked: "In whose interests are the attacks on activist women?" ■

Footnotes

1 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

2 See Tawfiq Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (Jerusalem, 1927) and Shelagh Weir, *Palestinian Costume* (London, 1989).

3 See, Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Intifada: The Palestinian*

Uprising—Israel's Third Front (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), pp. 55-7.

4 Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip Survey* (Jerusalem: The West See **Footnotes**, page 78

movement saw "the conquest of guarding" as related to the "conquest of the land."

The success of Labor Zionism was rooted in the contradiction between capitalist and nationalist objectives in the Eretz Israeli/Palestinian context. Labor's strategy of moderating Zionism's territorial aspirations while establishing Jewish exclusivity over the terri-

tory it could control was more feasible and more acceptable to Zionism's international patrons than the bourgeois vision of territorial maximalism. "But by bowing not to Palestinian national aspirations but only to the compelling facts of Palestinian demography," writes Shafir, "the labor movement perpetuated the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and left the door open to territorial

maximalism" (p. 219).

Shafir argues convincingly that the particular form of the Israeli national movement was shaped by its confrontation with the indigenous inhabitants of the land it sought to occupy while the Palestinian Arab national movement was in turn shaped by its encounter with Zionism. Today, both societies remain locked in this mutual embrace. ■

Speak, Bird, Speak Again: Palestinian Arab Folktales

By Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989.

Reviewed by Ann Barhoum.

Speak, Bird, Speak Again, a collection of 45 Palestinian folktales, represents the largest selection of Palestinian folklore in English. The tales were recorded by the editors over a two-year period in the West Bank, Gaza and the Galilee, then carefully and painstakingly translated into English. The excellent introduction explains how oral tradition has been an essential and lively part of Palestinian society and family life.

The stories are divided into major groupings reflecting the individual's passage through life stages and his/her relationship to society and environment. Most concern interactions among family members: the often tense relationships between mother and son, father and daughter, co-wives and in-laws provide rich material for the plots. While often earthy and somewhat violent, the tales are also quite entertaining. The editors' analysis at the end of each section, coupled with the introduction, takes the reader inside the work-

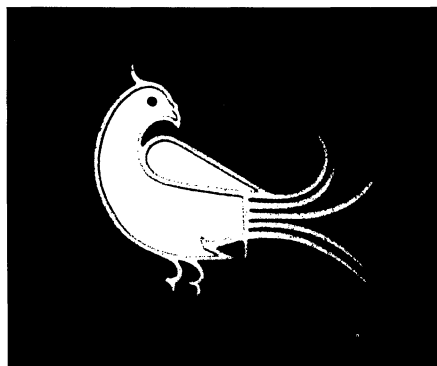
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Bank DataBase Project, 1986), p. 32.

⁵ A political science instructor from the Islamic University describes the transformation of Mujama' into Hamas as a case of the lower ranks of the movement "jumping the circle" and dragging its leadership into the intifada.

⁶ The problem continued, though to a lesser degree, with young



Detail from jacket illustration.

tifies the major themes confronting the individual and society, such as sexual conduct, authority, the forces of good and evil, family loyalty and marriage.

What is remarkable about this collection is that the tales were collected in a natural setting and translated, verbatim, into English without editing or modification. The reader gets a rare view of a teller who, as the editors point out, is usually an illiterate woman in her sixties, narrating her stories within the confines of the home and among family members.

Folktales are considered largely an art form practiced by women, and the tellers are bound by certain highly stylized linguistic formulas. They usually open with a statement such as, "Testify that God is One!" to which the audience responds, "There is no god but He!" Similarly, the teller concludes the tales with a charming formula such as, "This

is my tale, I've told it, and in your hands I leave it."

The plots reflect the importance of the family and marriage not only to the teller herself but to Palestinian women in general. Given the age and social position of the narrator, she is able to talk with frankness about taboo topics, such as incest and sexual desire. The stories illustrate that while decision-making is clearly the domain of men in Palestinian society, women also have power, both as narrators and as heroines. The institution of polygamy, practiced rarely at present, is not depicted favorably in the tales.

Some of the stories are similar to fairy tales found in Western culture. Reminiscent of Cinderella is "Sackcloth," a tale about a young girl whose beauty is disguised by ugly clothing. At night, she changes into a beautiful dress to attend a party at a palace where no one recognizes her, then leaves mysteriously only to return to her original disguise. Another tale similar to that of Rapunzel describes a woman with very long hair who pulls her mother up to her castle with her long tresses.

This collection suggests the importance of the social aspect of oral tradition: listening to and watching the teller and reacting collectively cannot be recorded. Although the tellers themselves are missing here, this extraordinary, annotated collection is the next best thing to hearing the tales on a starry night in Palestine. ■

boys. In September 1989, the women's committees and other concerned parties held an in-house conference in Jerusalem on children and the intifada, where they spent much time discussing how to educate and reestablish authority over this age group.

⁷ Writers have hinted at this relationship over the years, but few have been able to offer concrete evidence. The most commonly cited evidence is that Fatah and the Islamic groups

stood together as a bloc in the 1981 al-Najah University and Hebron University elections.

⁸ See Islah Gad, "From Salon Ladies to Popular Committees: Women in the Uprising," *Readings in Contemporary Palestinian Society*, Vol. II, (Birzeit University, 1989). Gad writes: "The absence of social critique in the national movement, especially on the part of Fatah which is its backbone, adds to the danger facing the women's movement" (p. 23).

Cohen, from page 20

from which the mass of liberal opinion takes its cue. With its patriotic image, its contacts in the kibbutz movement, the Knesset and even the army, it has both credibility and mobilizing potential.

The puzzle is why—particularly since the signals from the November 1988 PNC conference—Peace Now has moved in such a sluggish way. The movement is like a slumbering giant; roused to action and then settling back into a prolonged stupor. Since the dramatically successful event of December 1989—20,000 people circling the walls of the Old City, brutal police tactics, charges by the right that Peace Now was financed by the PLO—there has been three months of silence.

This pattern has deep roots: the overall dilemmas of liberal Zionism; the fact that this must be the only peace movement in the world that is pro-American; the movement's ambivalent relationship with the Labor Party. Perhaps, though, its caution will be vindicated. The truth is that more radical groupings are marginal—which is why Peace Now either ignores or patronizes them. Its ideological shift to the two-state package makes it more attractive now for refugees from more radical groups who have found no alternative homes (in the women's movement or human rights work).

Peace Now would be more attractive if it did not relapse into postures that infuriate even its long-term supporters. The Peace Now march to commemorate two years of the intifada, for example, adopted the slogan of "134 Children Killed—Israeli and Palestinian," with a poster of one Palestinian victim and one Jewish victim. This gives an absurd and morally disingenuous picture of symmetry. There would be no harm in acknowledging the truth that 129 of these 134 victims were Palestinian children. It would not have reduced in number the meager 2,000 who joined the march.

The Center

This small attendance was an index of a deeper malaise. All these progressive forces together—leftist and liberal, new and old, from the human rights field or the women's movement—have reached their peak of active mobilization. The changes that the intifada produced on this constituency had already happened in its first year. Evaluations written more than a year ago need very little updating.⁶

The current pantomime being enacted by the mainstream political parties needs no elaboration here. This is not to disparage the significance of these moves. On the contrary, this is obviously the terrain—from somewhere in the center of

the Labor Party to somewhere near the center of the Likud—where political change will have to come. Here is where 50-60 percent of the Jewish population is to be found—excluding, that is, radicals and active liberals on one side (perhaps 15 percent) and the lunatic right and the religious parties on the other (some 30 percent).

If the intifada has caused any deep ideological transformation in this population, it must be very deep indeed. On the surface—in the public rhetoric of the politicians who supposedly represent them—very little has changed. For them (and more explicitly the far right) the uprising is simply a new battle from the unfinished war of 1948 (which itself was just another expression of the Arab Revolt of 1936). Only solitary mavericks like Ezer Weizmann have publicly articulated even an opening position acceptable to Palestinians. They continue to lie and to defend the indefensible. Power is with the right, which has not fractured along class or ethnic lines. There also should be no illusions that the religious block is a Trojan horse in the national camp, waiting for some medieval bigot to give the peace signal.

This is not to say that change is inconceivable. At the cognitive level, the ground is being laid for accepting an eventual settlement. On individual issues, posed in the disembodied sentences of public opinion polls, there have been real shifts which the elite refuses to register. Conditional willingness to negotiate with the PLO (three or four years ago the property of less than 20 percent of the Jewish population) has now gone up to 55 percent. Despite desperate government efforts, the demonization of the PLO is slowly being reversed. There is a total lack of hysteria and even admiration for freelancers like Abie Nathan who simply get on a plane to talk to Arafat. Such "adventurism" has more effect on public opinion than 10 carefully planned demonstrations outside the prime minister's office.

At this stage, though, we should not be looking for a change of heart. When white South Africans began to change, they did so in response to the sheer power of events. We can glibly make a list of those structural events that need to happen here—economic pressure and crisis, loss of Israeli lives, further international isolation, shifts in the agenda of the global powers—but I doubt whether we have the analytical tools to predict just what constellation is necessary. Our fate is framed by the eternal Middle Eastern triangle: in one corner, the Palestinian struggle itself; in the second, great power interests, especially those of the US; in a third, those seismic changes in Israeli politics that I have mentioned here. Perhaps only someone standing outside this triangle can devise a good model to explain how these three corners act on each other. ■

Footnotes

1 Mordechai Bar-On, "Israeli Reactions to the Uprising," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 17 (Summer 1988), pp. 46-65.

2 "The Psychology and Politics of Denial: the Case of Israeli Liberals," paper given at Conference of Mental Health Workers for Peace, Jerusalem, May 1989, pp. 10-26.

3 Daphna Golan, "The Military Judicial System in the West

Bank" (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, November 1989).

4 Stanley Cohen, "The Myth of the Rule of Law," *Jerusalem Post*, January 23, 1989.

5 See Avishai Margalit, "The Kitsch of Israel," *New York Review of Books*, November 24, 1988.

6 For example, Bar-On, *op.cit.*, Edy Kaufman, "The intifada and the Peace Camp in Israel," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 17 (Summer 1988), pp. 66-81. See also the contributions on Israel in Zachary Lockman and Joel Beinin, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising Against Israeli Occupation* (Boston: MERIP/South End Press, 1989).