



On the Road to Peace . . .

THE JOURNEY GROWS SHORTER

On March 16, 1977, President Jimmy Carter stated his conviction that Palestinians are entitled to a "homeland." His definition is unclear; the exact proposal is unknown. But, finally, an American president has publicly acknowledged the rights and aspirations of the people of Palestine.

Many people throughout the world have been waiting 29 years to hear those words. Those 29 years have been years of exile, outrage, sorrow, and war for thousands of Palestinians. And the past 10 years have been years of military occupation for others. But now, the possibility of a homeland for the Palestinian people is more real than at any time in the past.

What happens next? It's difficult to say. Private talks between Israelis and Palestinians will probably continue. The Geneva Conference will probably be reconvened. There may be another war. But peace in the Middle East is no longer a question of "if" but rather of "when."

There are many agonizing issues to be discussed in peace negotiations—borders, international peace-keeping forces, rights of travel, the status of Jerusalem, etc. Perhaps equally as important, there needs to be a mutual recognition of the emotional suffering of Israelis and Palestinians to make cooperation a reality and not just an agreement written on a piece of paper.

Historically, Palestine has been a country with a diversity of people and a country of three major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It is part of the Palestinian tradition to live peacefully with people of diverse backgrounds and of all religions. Those who see only the problems between Palestinian and Israeli may tell you that peace is impossible. It's true that a just and lasting peace will be difficult—but it's not impossible. It will be difficult because both Israelis and Palestinians are people who have overcome much in the past. They can do it again.

The following words of Palestinians express some of their own thoughts about living in peace with Israelis (the quotations are taken from *The Palestinians: A Self Portrait* by Frank H. Epp and from issues of *The New York Times* and *Christian Science Monitor*):

"Why shouldn't the Palestinians live with Israelis? We believe in one God, the same God. We are against the political regime, not against the Jews as a people or as a religion."

"We, of course, don't like war. We want peace. . . . We were thrown out of our country and have been forced to fight. . . . We have been living with the Jews for 2,000 years in peace and we are determined to live with them for 4,000 years more in peace if they choose to."

"We have a land. We have a home. We are not asking for charity. We are asking for justice. We are not asking for somebody else's home. And unlike any other people in the world that I know of, we are not asking for our home by excluding those who occupied it. We are saying we want to share it—share our home with those people who settled in it."

"As a Christian, I think the Israelis have the right to live as much as we have the right to live. We do not like to see them suffer. If the Israelis would withdraw from the West Bank, they would gain our confidence."

"Both Israelis and Palestinians have to consider the just rights of the other. The Israelis have the rights of their state which they have established. . . . It's the duty of the Israelis to realize that what has been granted to them must also be granted to the Palestinians."

"We demand that peace talks be started with the Israelis so that at last we may begin to look into one another's eyes and see our own agony reflected."

HELP FROM ISRAELIS

There are many Israelis who have seen clearly the injustice suffered by Palestinians and who have spoken out against this injustice both in Israel and in the United States. Dr. Uri Davis, Daniel Amit, Uri Avneri, Amos Kenan are but a few of these people.

This issue of the Newsletter would like to recognize three Israelis in particular: Dr. Israel Shahak, Ms. Felicia Langer, and General Mattityahu Peled. These three people have been especially courageous in speaking about justice for all people. They have been especially helpful in promoting understanding and reconciliation between Israeli and Palestinian.

Dr. Israel Shahak for many years has been at the forefront of efforts toward Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation from a humanitarian point of view. For several years the Chairman of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights, Dr. Shahak has published extensive reports documenting what has happened to the Palestinians under the military occupation of Israel.

A professor of Organic Chemistry at Hebrew University, Dr. Shahak came to Israel in 1945 as a survivor of the Bergen-Belsen Concentration Camp in Germany. Dr. Shahak has made many public statements (including testimony before the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Movements of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives) advocating that justice and freedom belong to all people equally, including the Palestinians, and not to some people more than others.

Speaking of the Palestinians and Jerusalem, Dr. Shahak said in the *Christian Science Monitor*, July, 1975: "People who were born and lived most of their lives in Jerusalem are not allowed to come back and settle in their own city, if they are not Jews, of course. But if a Dutchman converts to Judaism tomorrow, he will not only be allowed to do so at once, he will also get an apartment . . . The Israeli Government speaks of the reunion of families when it comes to Russian Jews, but does not allow the same thing when it comes to Palestinians of Jerusalem."

Also a member of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights, Felicia Langer is an Israeli lawyer who has courageously defended the rights of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Ms. Langer was born in Poland and studied at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Her husband is a survivor of the Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Ms. Langer's book, *With My Own Eyes* (published by Ithaca Press, London, 1975), is a moving, personal account of the human facts behind the statistics: the confiscation of Palestinian property in the Occupied Territories, the deportations, the blowing up of houses, and the torture of Palestinian political prisoners.

In the Epilogue of her book, Felicia Langer writes: "In this book I have presented what I have seen with my own eyes in the years of Israeli rule in the Arab territories conquered in the war of June, 1967. There are still some people who claim that the occupation is liberal and humane . . . official figures concerning the occupation . . . speak for themselves . . . half a million fled or were expelled from the occupied territories . . . More than fifty Israeli settlements have been established . . . number of houses destroyed . . . thousands of detainees rotting in prisons . . . new wave of arrests without charges or trial . . . The progressive forces in Israel are struggling against the occupation and are striving for peace. They are fighting the oppression in the occupied Arab territories, the trampling of human rights, and the violation of the U.N. Charter and the Geneva Conventions . . . I hope that this book will contribute in the struggle towards the opening of a new chapter in Arab-Israeli relations on the basis of justice for all peoples."

Before retiring as a major general in 1969, General Matti Peled had a prominent career with the Israeli Army, serving as a Governor of the Gaza Strip and of the Jerusalem area. General Peled is currently Director of the Department of Arab Studies at the University of Tel Aviv. He is a founder of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace and has been in the international news in connection with his leadership in meetings between members of his group and members of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Manifesto of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace affirms the following principles, among others: "That this land is the homeland of its two peoples—the people of Israel and the Palestinian Arab people . . . That the heart of the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs is the confrontation between the two peoples of this land, which is dear to both . . . That the only path to peace is through co-existence between two sovereign states, each with its distinct national identity: the State of Israel for the Jewish people and a state for the Palestinian Arab people . . . That the border between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Arab state will correspond to the pre-war lines of June 1967, except for changes agreed upon by the parties and after settlement of the problem of Jerusalem . . . That the creation of a Palestinian Arab state will contribute decisively to the solution of the national and humanitarian problem of the refugees. Israel will assist in this solution . . ."

It's difficult to adequately express the high respect which these three Israelis command from people sincerely searching for a resolution of the Middle East conflict. They have successfully overcome emotional, political, religious, and social barriers, both real and imagined, to communicate their ideas. Certainly, the work of Dr. Shahak, Ms. Langer, and General Peled is one reason for the progress made thus far towards peace in the Middle East.

On the Road to Peace . . .

DEVELOPMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Whatever the final outcome of a peace settlement in the Middle East, the Occupied Territories will be of special importance to the Palestinians.

In recognition of this special importance, ANERA is evaluating new programs of humanitarian assistance among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. While ANERA aid to orphanages, schools, hospitals, and vocational training programs continues, ANERA is emphasizing new projects especially important to community development in the Occupied Territories—projects important now even before the Territories' final political status is determined.

Communities in the Occupied Territories face an unusually difficult task in trying to raise funds for major repairs or improvements in the quality of community life. In the United States, there are various ways a city government or group of individuals can raise funds: through city bonds, increasing local taxes, obtaining grants from the federal government or private foundations, or by individual contributions. But in the Occupied Territories, money for anything but the necessities of life, is scarce and the rate of inflation is one of the highest in the world (in 1975, the consumer price index rose 43% in the West Bank and 54% in the Gaza Strip). In addition, the area is under military occupation which further limits the normal ways a community might raise funds for development.

The people in the Occupied Territories pay taxes to their local city governments. Even though they are living under conditions of military occupation, they must also pay taxes to the Government of Israel.

The amount of taxes collected by the cities is relatively small and the municipal governments are able to provide only the most basic services. When major repairs are needed or a city service needs to be modernized, the Government of Israel theoretically provides subsidies to the municipal governments. In practice, the Israeli subsidies are small, few in number, and subject to the political attitudes of city officials, i.e., if a mayor and/or city council are known to oppose military occupation, their subsidies may be withheld or substantially reduced.

Since its inception, ANERA has assisted privately-sponsored community development projects in the Occupied Territories. Last year, ANERA made grants to In'ash El Usra in Bireh, West Bank, and to the Palestine Women's Union of Gaza. Among other projects, these two organizations provide daycare centers, literacy programs, and vocational training and employment opportunities for refugee women.

This year, ANERA is seeking funds for three additional community development projects, two of these at the request of local municipal governments:

GAZA SEWER SYSTEM

The town of Gaza is the principal city in the Gaza Strip with a population of 125,000 people. As with other municipalities in the Occupied Territories, the modest municipal budget is only large enough to cover basic operating expenses. Improvements in community services have been financed by the combined donations of cash from various sources and of labor from local citizens.

The people of Gaza have been trying to build a sewer system for the city. For several years, they have been successful, extending the sewer system block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood. But at the present time, they have exhausted all sources of funds and have no further prospects of raising money for the sewer pipe needed by the remaining neighborhoods.

The people of four neighborhoods in particular (El-Hawwash, Fed'ous, Abu El Idham, and El-Kherabeh) have volunteered their labor to dig the trench and lay the sewer pipe in their neighborhoods. The municipal government can provide engineering plans, technical supervision, and skilled labor. ANERA hopes to be able to raise enough money to buy the 1,260 metres of sewer pipe necessary for these four neighborhoods.

RAMALLAH

POULTRY

On the West Bank, there are hundreds of Palestinians on small farms, trying to make a modest living by selling chickens to markets in the Occupied Territories. Agricultural enterprises normally involve a good deal of risk. For the Palestinian farmer, living under military occupation, the risk is even greater.

The main problem is the farmers' dependency on the Israeli poultry industry. For example, the price of chicken feed is determined mainly by a single company in Israel. If the price is suddenly increased, the Palestinian farmer in the Occupied Territories is often not able to get what he needs. Additionally, when there is a surplus of chickens in Israel, Israeli poultry farmers send that surplus to markets in the Occupied Territories, thus assuring them of a good price for their chickens in Israel. But faced with this surplus, the Palestinian farmer in the Occupied Territories is forced to sell his own chickens, already at a low price, at an even lower price.

65 farmers in the Ramallah area have banded together to form a Poultry Cooperative. The Cooperative is able to buy wholesale chicks, feed, and medicine in Israel. The chickens raised by these farmers are then sold at a main shop in Ramallah and five other shops in the area.

COOPERATIVE

To reduce their dependency on Israel's poultry industry, the farmers are trying to build their own feed plant. If the farmers can depend on getting enough feed and a high quality of feed, both they and their customers on the West Bank will benefit: the farmers can sell better quality chickens at the same price and yet reduce their operating expenses.

On their own, the farmers have been able to get land, a building, raw materials, and some machinery for the feed plant. ANERA hopes to raise enough money to cover the remaining amount (about \$35,000) needed for a grinder, a mixer, a conveyor, 7 silos, and a sewing machine for the feed bags.

(Continued on next page.)

***ANERA is a non-profit, charitable organization which seeks: to increase total assistance in cash and kind from American sources to Palestinian refugees; to be responsive in crises affecting civilian populations in the area, particularly displacement and casualties caused by war; and to increase American understanding of the Palestinian refugee problem.**

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HEBRON MUNICIPAL LIBRARY

With a population of 80,000 Palestinians, Hebron is one of the largest and yet one of the least affluent cities on the West Bank. The municipal government has funds only to meet the minimal needs of the community and cannot finance important capital developments. In particular, Mayor Fahd Qawasmeh has requested ANERA's help in raising funds to construct a new municipal library.

The use of libraries in the Occupied Territories is slightly different than the use of libraries in the United States. Since books are relatively expensive and not as readily available in the Occupied Territories, libraries play an especially important educational role in the life of a community. In addition, because of a housing crisis in the Occupied Territories, most homes are quite modest and often lack space, heat, and light for proper reading and study. Young people especially

rely on libraries as a place to do their homework.

Hebron's municipal library previously consisted of one large room in the municipal building, trying to serve an average of 300 people a day. Aside from its inadequate size, the library was surrounded by the hustle and bustle of the daily work of the municipal government, making use of the library exciting but difficult. The new library will be the second story added on to a building owned by the city government and located near the poorer sections of Hebron.

With the help of a grant from the Agency for International Development, ANERA was able to provide initial funds for the construction of the library. The people of Hebron are providing the labor for the project and ANERA is now trying to raise money for the materials needed to complete construction and to buy furniture and books for the library.



One of the most exciting aspects of these community development projects is the ingenuity of the Palestinians involved. These people have been living under conditions of military occupation for ten years now. They are restricted by the Israeli military authorities in what they can and cannot do. Yet, by sheer determination and creative talent, they have been able to slowly improve their communities with a minimum of help from anyone else.

The people of Gaza have almost built their sewer system. The farmers of Ramallah have almost built a feed plant. The people of Hebron have almost built a better library. These are amazing people who have accomplished a lot on their own. ANERA hopes you'll be able to help them complete what remains.

Enclosed is my gift for community development projects in the Occupied Territories:

_____ \$15 _____ \$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 \$_____ Other

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

Contributions to ANERA are tax-deductible and should be sent with this form to the ANERA office. Thank you for your help.



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ON THE ROAD TO PEACE

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