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Rebirth of the Palestinian Struggle



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FORWARD MOTION is a magazine of socialist opinion and advocacy. We say socialist opinion because each FM presents analyses of important organizing work and reviews of political and cultural trends. We say socialist advocacy because FM is dedicated to a new left-wing presence in U.S. politics and to making Marxism an essential component of that presence. We share these purposes with other journals, but we seek for FM a practical vantage point from within the unions, the Black and other freedom struggles, the women's movement, the student, anti-war, and gay liberation movements, and other struggles. We also emphasize building working people's unity as a political force for social change, particularly through challenging the historical pattern of white supremacy and national oppression in the capitalist domination of this country.

In this Issue

For all Jesse Jackson's many successes this year, the primaries showed that some people will never accept a Black man for president. Likewise with the Palestinians and the uprising in the Occupied Territories. For some, no matter how well-organized and articulate the Palestinians are, and no matter how barbaric the Israelis behave, the Palestinians and their international representative, the PLO, will never be an acceptable negotiating partner.

There is another parallel. For a decade, the media echoed Reagan's claims that his policies not only gave more to those already on top, but also created jobs and opportunity for those left out. But working people had quite a different experience of Reaganism. When Jackson jumped in to speak not only for the Black movement, but for all those left out, locked out and excluded, he changed the political landscape. Building on local gains—the wave of Black electoral advance as well as the anti-corporate struggles of many local unions—Jackson's two campaigns have been a new thing for most Americans, who are "hearing it from a Black person."

Likewise for the political landscape enveloping the Palestinians. The Uprising has also become a matter of "hearing it from a Palestinian." More Palestinians, both notable and the young in the streets (the *shabab*) have spoken in the U.S. media since the beginning of the year than since the turn of the century. As our editorial statement in this issue stresses, after years of news reports mediated by Israeli government politics and other self-serving interests, the Palestinians have shown themselves to be alive if not yet quite well, thank you, capable of national-scale action, unarmed against tremendous odds. In a world of Reagans and Thatchers who like to proclaim that the colonial era is long gone, the Palestinians' actions are speaking for all those still seeking national rights and self-determination.

This FM highlights both. We didn't plan it that way, but in working on it, the parallels between the Rainbow and the Palestinians' uphill climb were striking. In both cases, we have a year of fantastic political advance to absorb, assess and go forward from.

Also in this issue, we have two important book reviews. Peter Olney reviews Eric Mann's chronicle of the GM Van Nuys struggle, well-known on the labor scene, but of interest to everyone looking for lines of advance into a post-Reagan political world. And Charles Sarkis introduces FM readers to Salvadoran revolutionary Miguel Marmol, whose life and legendary brushes with death have followed that of his country's struggle for fifty years and more. If you've read yourself out of mystery novels after our last issue, like at least one FM collective member did, it is not too late to run out and add one of these two books to your summer reading list.

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Tension inside,
tension outside...
You feel you are in
a whirlpool,
a pressure cooker...
Occupation,
demonstrations,
news,
trials,
prisons,
demolished houses,
demolished souls.
Taxes...
a new devaluation,
a new settlement there;
tomorrow they'll build a new one here.
Where shall I go then?
To whom shall I protest?

— Sahar Khalifah



Uprising in the Occupied Territories

The *Intifada*, or Uprising, in the occupied territories of Palestine has reached a crucial phase. Begun as a sudden rebellion against the daily injustices and atrocities of Israeli occupation, it has grown into a well-organized, sustained contest of wills with Israel for authority in the West Bank, Gaza, and even East Jerusalem. What has emerged in the national liberation movement is a new political option that would have been hard to imagine a year ago—the option of carving out zones of self-rule under conditions of overwhelming military disadvantage.

Here in the U.S., the Uprising has finally loosened the stranglehold of US Zionist opinion in interpreting events in the Mideast. When even Secretary of State Shultz tells Israel that their occupation will not hold, doubt sets in. And the incidents we see on TV, the details of the occupation, belie the simple Zionist stereotypes with which we have been barraged for so long. It is no longer possible for the media to cast the Palestinians as either terrorists or so victimized that they no longer deserve the status of a people. And it is hard now to maintain the image of Israel as a small, industrious outpost of everything Western, clean, and civilized, a beleaguered oasis. We are shocked into attention by an image on the nightly news of two boys scrambling up a hill, then tumbling down, shot in the back. We flinch at the stories of children's eyes being gouged out and old women's homes blown to bits. We can't help but admire the persistence, creativity, courage and grass roots organization of the uprising.

Palestine, an indigenous people organizing a powerful struggle to gain self-determination fought from what little homeland they still occupy. Israel, a settler nation, ready to deny their subjected enemy the most basic of rights. As the accompanying articles reveal, Israeli policies since the occupation are remarkably familiar: land confiscation, torture, murder, deportation, the banning of political parties, stealing through taxation, collective punishment, the separation of families... That a Pales-

tinian uprising would eventually occur should come as little surprise. But neither, then, should the fact that Israel would have been employing their "iron fist" policies in the first place. These are the inevitable policies of an occupying regime. What is a bit surprising is how silent just about everyone in this country—including some of the Left—has been about U.S. support for the Israeli settler government.

A Remarkable Blindspot

In a period when the US has become increasingly vulnerable in its support of unsavory regimes in power or in exile (Philippines, Haiti, Panama, and the Contras), when there has been a growing and vigorous movement against US support to the settler state perhaps most comparable to Israel—its political bedfellow South Africa—why has the official US version of the Mideast situation gone so far unchallenged by anybody but a beleaguered minority in this country? How did Mayor Koch get away with tarring and feathering Jesse Jackson for simply suggesting that Palestinians too have rights? Why was there so little response from other Democrats (other than Jackson) when frontrunner Dukakis articulated a position on Israel to the right of George Schultz? Why has there been so meager a rallying to the Palestinian cause despite one of the most courageous grass-roots uprisings of recent history? The comparison to South Africa may be instructive.

In contrast to US popular reaction to what's happening in the Mideast, the 1970s uprising against settler rule in South Africa sparked a lively wave of protest here against US capitalism's complicity with the Botha regime. Our government's complicity with the settler regime of South Africa struck a sensitive moral nerve in the US people—the nerve of white supremacy. And it connected with a natural and a naturally progressive constituency: the Afro-American people and the progressive forces that the Black Liberation Movement so often car-

ries in its wake, students, the religious Left, the component forces of the emerging coalition of the Rainbow. It is significant that the first pressing demand Jesse Jackson chose and was able to exact from Michael Dukakis this year was to declare South Africa a terrorist state.

Of course, the situation in the Mideast also strikes a moral nerve in the US people and connects with an influential and naturally concerned constituency. But so far this has served only to reinforce support for Israel. Because the most sensitive moral nerve that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict hits is the nerve of anti-Jewish semitism and the outrage of the Holocaust (one of the few instances of genocide in which the US can claim, just barely, to have been on the virtuous side). And the most powerful constituency in this country prepared to propagandize and organize in defense of its side in the conflict has been the Israeli lobby, claiming to represent the entire Jewish American community.

The result has been a remarkable blindspot in which the existence of a whole disenfranchised Palestinian people has been almost entirely obscured from US view.

A Natural Constituency

It will not, even now, be easy to build popular support for Palestinian self-determination, to organize militant opposition to our own government's close ties with Israel. But the opportunity for some kind of organized response is better now than it has been for a long time. Now, as we witness Israeli soldiers and settlers gunning down children, is as good a time as any to break the taboo against speaking ill of Israel. The uprising and the viciousness of Israel's "iron fist policy" make such opposition an obvious and immediate moral obligation.

But where does the natural constituency for such a movement come from?

Today the multinational Rainbow movement, spearheaded by the Afro-American movement, has the best potential for becoming a powerful vehicle for pro-Palestinian support work, as Jesse Jackson's continuing, lone voice at the national level in support of a Palestinian state indicates. And it is the Rainbow which has the potential for bringing three important but disparate communities together in an effort to redirect US popular opinion about the Mideast.

The most obvious, and likely the most significant, element of leadership actively supporting the Palestinians comes from the two million Arabs that live in this country today. Over their years here, Arab-Americans have



Kamal Boullata

become well-rooted in both the working and the middle classes and by now have often developed stable and well-organized communities with quite a few resources at their disposal. Still, these communities have tended to be split up, culturally oppressed and politically subdued, and like the Palestinians themselves, given little recognition or legitimacy. For years, Arab-Americans have been trying to draw attention to the peculiarly virulent and unself-conscious kind of chauvinism directed towards Arabs in this country. The *Intifada* has given their efforts new inspiration and a new resonance; it has provided the potential for a kind of "coming out" for a stronger, more united Arab-American community.

Second, the Afro-American movement is certainly well-situated to make a contribution to the Palestinian cause. For complex reasons including parallels with Afro-Americans' domestic situation, Third World solidarity, and Islamic currents within it, significant elements within the Afro-American movement have been a reliable source of support for the Palestinian cause. And in the current situation, parallels with the South African uprising and the recent successes of the Afro-American movement in exposing that settler regime's dependence on US capital make it a natural leadership force in pro-Palestinian work.

But there are some hazards here as well. For historical reasons, similar to those affecting U.S. society as a whole, there are also currents of anti-Jewish prejudice simmering within the Afro-American movement. The recent paranoid remarks by an aide to Mayor Sawyer of Chicago about Jews injecting Black children with AIDS presents a current and fairly outrageous instance of this.

This speaks to the role of a third important political constituency in responding to the uprising, a constituency which has shown a strong desire to draw a firm line between anti-Zionism and anti-(Jewish) semitism. That is, the progressive wing of the Jewish community. Just as in Israel itself the Palestinian Uprising has given new strength and militancy to the forces opposed to Zionist policy in the occupied territories (Pressberg comments on an Israeli Peace Now demonstration of 50,000 participants staged on January 23), so too has the viciousness of Israeli attacks on Palestinians disquieted a very significant sector of Jewish Americans. Many Jews feel (whether they continue to support Israel or not) that they are somehow personally accountable for the atrocities being perpetrated by the key political representative of Judaism in the modern world, the sole Jewish state. And though it is certainly debatable whether Jews should be more obliged than other people to speak out against Israel, progressive Jewish response to Israel's atrocities has had a positive effect.

Tactically, the engagement of Jews in opposing Israel could be crucial in breaking the taboo against anti-Zionism in this country. And in particular, Jewish involvement in promoting a pro-Palestinian agenda within the Rainbow Coalition offers progressive-minded Jews an important opportunity to ensure that support for the Palestinians does not become clouded by anti-Semitism, anti-Jewish semitism, that is.

A Movement At Home

Right now, the Uprising gives urgency to some specific and immediate demands that grassroots activists ought to be popularizing and organizing around, demands targeting our own government. These include: 1) Support the work of the Palestine Aid Society and other relief agencies and pressure the Israeli government to let medical and other humanitarian aid flow more easily to Palestinian communities. 2) Repeal the closing of the Palestine Information Office in Washington. (The closing of the PLO United Nations Mission has been temporarily stopped in the courts.) 3) Review and curtail US aid to Israel. 4) Enforce sanctions against companies doing business with South Africa, including Israeli companies. As a form of public protest, a direct boycott of Israeli goods might be an effective way to popularize the issue. 5) Now more than ever, press for U.S. recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to choose their own national representatives, which without question remains the PLO.

Looking beyond the immediate situation, if the Rainbow Coalition were to become the context for a new level of pro-Palestinian, anti-Zionist activity, it could also be of real long-term value to the progressive movement here at home. There is already an Arab-American presence within the Rainbow; by promoting its leadership, the Rainbow would be helping to legitimize, unify and strengthen the Arab-American communities under progressive leadership. And if the Rainbow could also provide the context for the rapprochement of Afro-Americans, progressive Jewish Americans, and Arab Americans—those "natural" constituencies of the Palestinian cause—it would be taking an important step in unifying three elements within U.S. society that are of great consequence to our political future.

—Forward Motion Collective, 7/88

The Uprising: Causes and Consequences

Gail Pressberg

The national uprising by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has raised a number of critical questions. Why, after two decades of belligerent occupation, are Palestinians now able collectively to challenge the ability of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to control the streets of the West Bank and Gaza Strip? How are they sustaining the uprising? What is the potential role for an Arab national party in Israel's next election? Will the Israeli body politic recognize the dangers of remaining an occupier?

The Roots of the Current Crisis

The first immediate trigger was the 26 November hang glider incident, in which a young Palestinian guerrilla entered Israel and succeeded in killing six Israeli soldiers. Young Palestinians took note of the importance of individual action. The second trigger was the 8 December accident in Gaza in which Palestinian workers were killed when their van was hit by an Israeli truck. Rumors spread quickly through the Gaza Strip that the incident was not an accident, but was in fact retaliation for the 6 December murder of an Israeli in the Gaza Strip. To date, the truth is not known.

The longer term factors include the humiliation suffered by Palestinians as a result of Israel's "iron fist policy" (a term coined in 1985 by Israel's defense minister, Yitzhaq Rabin) as well as their frustration with Arab governments for their failure to give priority to the Palestinian question. In addition to the relatively recent iron fist policy, however, it is worth briefly mentioning how costly the twenty-year occupation has been to the Palestinians.

Land Confiscation. 657,290 dunums of Palestinian land—52 percent of the West Bank and 30 percent of the Gaza Strip—have been confiscated. Fifty two thousand Jewish settlers have moved to settle-



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ments in the West Bank. A system of roads was built connecting the settlements, thus enabling the settlers to travel to major cities in Israel without having to pass through West Bank cities and villages.

Legal System. Israeli settlers in the occupied territories are governed by one system of law, while a separate system of more than 1,200 military regulations governs the daily lives of Palestinians. Palestinians in the occupied territories are subject to arbitrary arrest and detention for fourteen days without the benefit of attorney. Many Palestinian detainees are subject to torture. A study published by *The Sunday Times* (London) on June 19, 1977 revealed widespread torture in Israel's prisons. The *Times* concluded: "Torture of Arab prisoners is so widespread and systematic that it cannot be dismissed as 'rogue cops' exceeding orders. It appears to be sanctioned as deliberate policy." The report of the Landau Commission in Israel also exposed the practice of torturing Palestinian detainees but sanctioned it under certain circumstances. In addition, Palestinians convicted in military courts have had no right to appeal their convic-

tion. (The Israeli High Court has recommended to the Defense Ministry that the right to appeal be granted. As of this writing, Defense Minister Yitzhaq Rabin had asked his legal adviser to develop procedures for this appeal.)

Absence of Political Freedom. More than one thousand books and magazines are banned in the occupied territories, many of which can be found in the libraries and bookstores of Jerusalem. The Palestinian press is regularly censored and its editors subjected to imprisonment, town arrest, house arrest, and deportation. Political parties are banned and conviction of membership in an illegal organization means imprisonment and a stiff fine. West Bank municipal elections were last held in 1976. During the early 1980s almost all of the mayors of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were deposed; the mayors of Halhul and Hebron were deported.

Taxation. An inequitable system of taxation is enforced in the occupied territories. According to *Time* magazine of January 18, 1988, the Israeli government collects \$393 million in taxes and spends only \$240 million in health, education, and other human services.

Gail Pressberg is the Executive Director of the Foundation for Middle East Peace. She spent December 1987 and January 1988 in the occupied territories. A longer version of this article originally appeared in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Spring 1988) and is reprinted by permission.

Palestinians have no voice in how this money is spent.

Collective Punishment. The demolition of Palestinian houses has been used by the IDF since 1967 as a means of collective punishment. Demolitions or sealings occur when a family member is accused or convicted of an alleged crime; thus, the entire family is punished in addition to the defendant's own sentence. According to a study entitled "Punishing the Innocent: House Demolitions As Collective Punishment on the West Bank" (Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding, 1987), twenty-four houses were demolished in 1985 (twenty-four were "sealed" and another seven "partially sealed" in the same year); thirteen were demolished in 1986 (ten were "sealed" and another seven "partially sealed" in the same year); three houses were demolished in 1987 (nine "sealed" and another twenty "partially sealed" in the same year).

Other forms of collective punishment used by the IDF include curfews, closure of universities and schools, and "speedy trials."

Travel Restrictions. Palestinians have to obtain permission each time they want to travel. Palestinian attorneys who deal with occupation-related cases estimate that each year there are thousands of people who fail to receive permission to travel.

Difficulty of Family Reunion. The hardship caused by the inability to reunify families was made clear by the story of a Palestinian woman who brought her sick grandchild to a mobile health clinic in a West Bank refugee camp. Her four sons were in prison. There is no wage earner in the family. Her daughter-in-law (the mother of the sick child brought to the clinic) has an identity card which lists her residence as Jordan. This allows her only three-month stays in the occupied territories. At the time, she was living illegally in the West Bank because she could not afford the trip back to Jordan. Her repeated requests for family reunion, which would have enabled her to stay legally, have been denied.

Nearly a decade ago, Sahar Khalifah, a Palestinian novelist from Ramallah, summed up the frustrations then felt by Palestinians:

Tension inside, tension outside...You feel you are in a whirlpool, a pressure cooker...Occupation, demonstrations, news, trials, prisons, demolished houses, demolished souls. Taxes...a new devaluation, a new settlement there; tomorrow they'll build a new one here. Where shall I go then? To whom shall I protest? (University of Iowa, Iowa City, 11/29/78)

Palestinians under the age of twenty-one, who comprise more than 50 percent of the West Bank and Gaza's

population, have learned not to fear their occupiers. To go to prison has become an honor, a badge of courage. Defense attorneys and ex-prisoners report that while in prison Palestinians become part of a political organization that provides the moral support they need to withstand the hardships of imprisonment. As a result, the Israeli prison system has ceased to cultivate the fear in young Palestinians that might keep them off the streets. Such a development could only take place over time.

An example of the absence of fear among young people is attested to by two stories. In Gaza in mid-December, soldiers captured a fourteen-year-old boy. The young Palestinian turned to the soldiers, ripped open his shirt, and said, "Shoot me." A soldier fired and killed him. Also in Gaza, soldiers arrested an eight-year-old boy. During the interrogation, the soldiers asked the youngster who had told him to throw rocks. The boy replied, "my brother Muhammad." The soldiers then went to the boy's house, only to find that brother Muhammad was only three years old. The Palestinian teacher who related the story did so to demonstrate the courage of the youngster who was impudent in the face of authority. After all, the teacher noted, after being humiliated the soldiers could have gone back to beat the boy.

Since the late 1970s, Palestinians in the occupied territories have recognized that they can no longer rely solely on the diplomatic initiatives of Arab governments or on the Palestine Liberation Organization to secure Palestinian political rights and an end to occupation.

In addition, since the late 1970s Palestinians in the occupied territories have recognized that they can no longer rely solely on the diplomatic initiatives of Arab governments or on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to secure Palestinian political rights and an end to occupation. The first major, post-1967 indigenous body,



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the National Guidance Committee, emerged in the late 1970s to coordinate a Palestinian response to the Camp David Accords. It did not, however, claim the right to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinian people; that was left to the PLO.

By the fall of 1987, Palestinians had determined that the United States and Israel would continue to block an international peace conference and that the Arab countries seemed to place a higher priority on the Iran-Iraq war than on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. By the summer of 1987, most Palestinians in the occupied territories were bored when the subject of the international conference was raised. Said one, "Look, we all support an international conference. But how can the common person believe negotiations will take place when the Arab governments are focused only on their own issues (and not ours) and the United States and Israel are so recalcitrant? People are going about their daily lives and are very frustrated." During the same summer, a professor at Birzeit University who works closely with students stated, "Young people are disillusioned with Arab politics. They're saying that we have to take matters into our own hands."

For many Palestinians the Arab summit held in Amman in November 1987 was but another indication that Arab governments placed insufficient priority on resolving the Palestine question. As one Palestinian political activist said in December, "It's hard enough for Arab

"The word 'beatings' simply doesn't convey the medical magnitude of what's been happening. The numbers, rate, and scope of beatings cannot be considered aberrations or deviations but must be seen as closer to the norm.

—Dr. Jack Geiger,
CUNY Medical School

governments to develop a strategy to deal with their top priorities. When we saw that our situation was moved to a low priority, it was the signal that we'd better rely on ourselves."

Organizational and Institutional Development

One of the lessons learned by Palestinians in the early 1980s was that of the need to create a grassroots network of organizations whose task it would be to mobilize Palestinians at the base of society. The grassroots movement seeks to involve the people of the towns, villages, and refugee camps. Its constituent organizations encourage mass participation and they are decentralized: decision-making takes place locally, where people live and work, so that the organizations are less vulnerable when their leaders are arrested, placed under house or town arrest, or deported.

The grassroots movement is characterized by a relatively young, professionally trained leadership. Its decentralized organizational components consist of youth organizations, community centers, labor unions, women's organizations, and groups involved in medical and agricultural work. For the most part, there is no single leader of any organization—a change from the past when most community service organizations had a single leader with no procedure for choosing a successor. Peo-

ple are elected to leadership committees based on their abilities and contributions. In other words, leadership is earned, not inherited. Palestinian factions—primarily Fateh, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the Palestine Communist Party—have organized some of these grassroots organizations; in other cases organizations connected with professional associations have emerged.

People involved in the grassroots organizations talk about how these institutions have helped them overcome their sense of isolation and have provided a certain "safety in numbers."

Another characteristic of these organizations is that their activities are often labor-intensive. For example, community volunteers are mobilized to assemble the first aid kits used by the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees in providing first aid to besieged villages and refugee camps. Day care centers sponsored by women's organizations are used in the morning to educate three, four, and five-year-olds; in the afternoon the same centers hold classes to train teachers and mothers or sponsor some kind of income-generating project. (In one such center, profits from an afternoon cracker-baking factory support the morning pre-school program.) Women's groups knit sweaters for Palestinian prisoners and make Palestinian flags. Agronomists and farmers work collectively to reclaim land, develop cooperative marketing strategies, and deliver relief aid to besieged refugee camps and villages.

People involved in the grassroots organizations talk about how these institutions have helped them overcome their sense of isolation and have provided a certain "safety in numbers." A spirit of solidarity among Palestinians emerges which helps develop the courage and support people need to enable them to take risks. Participants also speak of the increased development of their skills through workshops and through simply being in an environment conducive to learning and experimenting. New problems that have emerged during the

uprising are being solved in an innovative manner. For example, an organization of locksmiths was created to repair locks on stores that were opened by the IDF by force during the army's attempt to break the commercial strike.

The Islamic Factor

The extent of the influence of Islamic organizations in the uprising remains a matter of some speculation. Observers on the ground note that Islamic influence is more significant in the Gaza Strip than in the West Bank. Names of Islamic groups (e.g., Islamic Jihad) were to be found as early as the first week of the uprising on leaflets urging Gazans to strike and demonstrate. These groups also used the mosques to encourage Palestinians to resist occupation and take to the streets.

The significance of the Islamic groups in Gaza during the current uprising may derive from three sources. First, they had the infrastructure as well as the audio equipment from mosques to help mobilize large numbers of Gazans. Second, they devised slogans that inspired Palestinians. On February 6, John Kifner, correspondent of the *New York Times*, quoted from one leaflet: "He who throws stones goes to heaven." Third, mosques are one place where Palestinians may congregate legally, listen to a sermon, and then leave in a group to demonstrate. The mosque, therefore, takes on additional importance because under occupation, according to military law, all other meetings are banned.

Unified National Command of the Uprising

While the decisions regarding organizing demonstrations in a given village or refugee camp are made at the local level, the decision to call for area-wide strikes is made by the Unified National Command. Special attention is paid to factors influencing people's ability to sustain the protests and withstand the pressures that are inevitably brought to bear by the IDF. As one member of the uprising committee said, "We don't make demands that people won't follow. We know the pulse of the street" (*New York Times*, 2/6/88).

As early as the beginning of January, a strike routine was devised which called for a three-day strike period followed by a few days of respite. Then a leaflet was distributed calling for three days of commercial strikes, while on the fourth day allowance was made for shopkeepers to open for three or four hours. In the West

Bank and Gaza Strip shopkeepers opened from 8:00-11:00 a.m., while in East Jerusalem they opened from 4:00-7:00 p.m. This allowed Palestinians to buy their goods from fellow Palestinians.

The Unified National Command also issues news bulletins, all of which appear in Arabic and a few of which have also appeared in English. The bulletins report on the developments, slogans, and demands of the day; the responses of the Israeli peace movement and solidarity efforts (one bulletin thanked the members of the Israeli soldiers' protest movement Yesh Givul for a demonstration it organized at the Gaza-Israel border); and the Palestinian organizations and their volunteer efforts (one such bulletin thanked the Union of Medical Relief Committees for its role in providing first aid to villages and refugee camps).

Local committees decide when people in their districts can sustain demonstrations and/or strikes, raise money and material aid for the neighboring villages and refugee camps which may be under curfew, and pay attention to their constituency's morale. Two things are striking about this new form of local leadership. The first is that it is a pragmatic leadership: it plans tactics so that the public is energized, not exhausted. Second, it has been able to mobilize an unprecedentedly high percentage of the population. The result of this mobilization is that Palestinians make it difficult, if not impossible, for the IDF to retain control of the streets.

During a visit to the Gaza Strip, it was difficult to tell whether young Palestinians were chasing Israeli army vehicles or whether Israeli army vehicles were chasing the young Palestinians. Two villages south of Hebron declared themselves "liberated" zones and demonstrations made it impossible for the army to enter without using massive force. So many Palestinian flags were raised as symbols of the effectiveness of strikes and demonstrations that the Israeli army confiscated reams of green, black and red cloth.

Palestinian Demands

During the early days of the uprising, the commercial strikes and demonstrations seemed to be aimed at wresting control of the streets from the IDF. Palestinians presented their demands on January 14 at a press conference held at the National Palace in East Jerusalem. The demands were made in the name of "all Palestinian institutions and personalities," although certain journalists, physicians, and labor leaders who had planned to

attend were detained by the army and prevented from appearing. The demands, or the "fourteen points," covered a full range of economic, land, human rights, political rights, and labor rights issues.

Issuing the fourteen points answered the challenge of Western diplomats, journalists, and officials who were asking, "But what do the demonstrators or their leaders want on the practical level?" The demands also dispelled any notion that a local leadership was emerging that would replace the PLO or that autonomy proposals in and of themselves would be acceptable to Palestinians. Examination of the demands and their preamble reveals that only the PLO can represent Palestinians at negotiations and that Palestinians in the occupied territories must be allowed to meet with PLO leaders so that they can have a voice in the determination of PLO policies. Indeed, if one analyzes the document, the fourteen demands can be seen as part of a process of transition from occupation to a Palestinian state, to be achieved through negotiations at an international peace conference.

Issuing the fourteen points...dispelled any notion that a local leadership was emerging that would replace the PLO or that autonomy proposals in and of themselves would be acceptable to Palestinians.

The demands were prepared by Palestinians inside the occupied territories and shared with the PLO's Executive Committee. Changes were recommended which were agreed to by the Palestinians of the territories. The demands were then announced. This interaction reveals a relationship between the PLO and the territories whereby Palestinians under occupation now decide upon local tactics and initiate strategic plans in coordination with the PLO. It is a relationship which is neither hostile to the PLO nor one in which the PLO "pushes a button" and the Palestinians automatically act.

The Israeli government and public were surprised by the initial ferocity of the strikes and demonstrations. This was understandable since heretofore Palestinians had not sustained long-term civil resistance against the occu-

pation. During the early days of the uprising the Israeli government attempted to blame the PLO for the unrest, then it turned on the press. At the same time, peace groups were caught off guard and were unprepared to act.

Reaction in Israel

Three weeks into the uprising Defense Minister Rabin admitted the difficulty of maintaining order in the streets. After the use of live ammunition, tear gas, speedy trials, detention, and deportation failed to quell the demonstrations, the Ministry of Defense announced that it would resort to beatings. Young people with broken arms, it reasoned, would be off the streets and unable to throw rocks for a while. But the beatings policy backfired: it not only failed to bring an end to the uprising, but also provoked the wrath of the international community as well as many Israelis because of its widespread severity. A *Washington Post* report of a press conference held by the Physicians for Human Rights organization, quoted Dr. Jack Geiger, Professor of Community Medicine at the CUNY Medical School and the delegation's chairman, as saying: "The word 'beatings' simply doesn't convey the medical magnitude of what's been happening. The numbers, rate, and scope of beatings cannot be considered aberrations or deviations but must be seen as closer to the norm."

Early opinion polls of Israeli public attitudes reflected majority support for the beatings. In a poll commissioned by *Newsweek* and published on January 18, 46 percent of the Israeli public supported the government's "iron fist" policy to quell the demonstrations; another 40 percent found the government's policy too soft; only 7 percent thought the policies too harsh. Twenty-four percent of the public considered a solution to the conflict to be "important" or "very important." Fifty-six percent declared that the uprising had not altered their views concerning the status of the occupied territories. Among the 44 percent who changed their views, 24 percent proclaimed an increased willingness to give up territory in return for peace. The seemingly contradictory views in the poll reflect the turmoil in Israel, perhaps because the uprising represents the first shock to Israeli complacency about the territories in twenty years.

Israeli society remains split. At first, Gush Emunim and the settlers were relatively quiet. Presumably they perceived that Defense Minister Rabin was dealing forcefully with the situation but was having difficulty in



Foreshadowing elements of Israeli public opinion today, this 1946 Irgun (a pre-Independence Zionist military organization) poster represents "the sole solution" to the Palestinian problem by a map of an expanded Israel.

restoring order. However, as they became more vulnerable to attack, the settlers began to take their security into their own hands and pressed right-wing Israeli politicians to demand tougher action.

The Israeli Peace Camp

Can the Israeli peace camp move from "protest to politics"? Can it transform Israeli politics so that doves gain enough Knesset seats to form the next Israeli government? While a strong U.S. initiative supporting both Palestinian self-determination and Israel's security needs would certainly propel the peace process forward, significant progress toward a just peace is likely only when

the Israeli public is convinced of two things: that there is a price to be paid for ruling over 1.5 million Palestinians against their will; and that Palestinians are willing to live in a separate entity at peace with Israel.

The Peace Now movement held two small demonstrations (3,000 people) in late December and early January. With West Bank and Gaza streets still in turmoil, on January 23, 1988 Peace Now staged the country's largest demonstration since 1982. Police estimated the number of participants at 50,000. Palestinians, including Hanna Siniora, the editor of *Al-Fajr*, and Zakaria al-Agha, chair of the Gaza Medical Association, were among a list of Israeli and Palestinian speakers at the rallies. In December, a one-day commercial strike by Israel's Arab Palestinian citizens surprised many observers because of its unprecedented nature, and on December 21, a large demonstration of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel was held in support of their brethren in the territories. What worries some hawkish Israelis and pleases the doves is that Israel's Palestinian minority could emerge as a viable political force in favor of a "two-state" solution.

Protest activity in Israel has gradually increased. Yesh Givul, the Israeli soldier's movement, collected the signatures of 160 reservists, proclaiming their refusal to serve in the occupied territories. Six hundred of Israel's most prominent academics, including a former president of the Hebrew University, signed a statement in early February expressing deep concern over Israel's future and warned that "no solution is possible" while Israel maintains control of Gaza and the West Bank. The petition called on the government to re-evaluate its policy and ended by stating, "There is no solution to the situa-

tion in which Israel is caught as long as the imposed control of the Arab population in the territories continues." Seven hundred mental health workers—psychiatrists, social workers, and clinical psychologists—signed a similar statement.

Conclusion

The Palestinian uprising that began on 9 December 1987 has changed Palestinian history. As one young refugee camp resident said, "Abu 'Ammar succeeded in bringing our struggle to world attention in the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s we in the territories have had to bring it back to the world's attention."

Whatever the future holds, Palestinians identify numerous victories as a result of the ongoing uprising. First, they have challenged one of the world's strongest armies, the IDF, for control of the streets. They have also forged an unprecedented degree of unity at the grassroots level, the level at which unity is most important in resisting the occupation. Just as important, they have succeeded in reawakening the seemingly dormant Israeli peace movement. On the international level, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed a resolution on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, thus placing the Palestinian question back on the international political agenda.

The future is impossible to predict, but one thing is certain. Palestinians in the occupied territories have, in the most sustained effort to date, taken into their own hands the Palestinian struggle for control over their people's lives and political future. ■

The photographs on pages 7, 9 and 16 are reprinted from the May/June 1988 issue of *Palestine Perspectives* with permission of the editor. *Palestine Perspectives* is available for \$15 per year (\$25 outside the U.S. and Canada) from Palestine Perspectives, 9522A Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031.

The Palestinians' Fourteen Demands

The following document was presented at a press conference held in Jerusalem on January 14, 1988 by Professor Sari Nusaybah of Birzeit University. Also present at the session were Mustafa al-Natshah, former mayor of Hebron; Gabi Baramki, acting president of Birzeit University; and Mubarak 'Awad, director of the Jerusalem Center for the Study of Non-Violence. The Israeli army prevented certain Palestinian personalities from Gaza from attending the press conference. Two others were arrested on their arrival at the National Palace Hotel: Ibrahim Qara'in, head of the Palestinian Press Service, and trade unionist Bassam Ayyub. It was presented in the name of "Palestinian nationalist institutions and personalities from the West Bank and Gaza." [Subsequent to this and other organizing, Awad was deported with great fanfare, despite wide international protest—ed.]

During the past few weeks the occupied territories have witnessed a popular uprising against Israel's occupation and its oppressive measures. This uprising has so far resulted in the martyrdom of tens of our people [now close to two hundred—ed.], the wounding of hundreds more, and the imprisonment of thousands of unarmed civilians.

This uprising has come to further affirm our people's unbreakable commitment to its national aspirations. These aspirations include our people's firm national rights of self-determination and of the establishment of an independent state on our national soil under the leadership of the PLO, as our sole legitimate representative. The uprising also comes as further proof of our indefatigable spirit and our rejection of the sense of despair which has begun to creep into the minds of some Arab leaders who claim that the uprising is the result of despair.

The conclusion to be drawn from this uprising is that the present state of affairs in the Palestinian occupied territories is unnatural and that Israeli occupation cannot continue forever. Real peace cannot be achieved except

through the recognition of Palestinian national rights, including the right of self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on Palestinian national soil. Should these rights not be recognized, then the continuation of Israeli occupation will lead to further violence and bloodshed, and the further deepening of hatred. The opportunity for achieving peace will also move further away.

The only way to extricate ourselves from this scenario is through the convening of an international conference with the participation of all concerned parties including the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, as an equal partner, as well as the five permanent members of the Security Council, under the supervision of the two superpowers.

On this basis we call upon the Israeli authorities to comply with the following list of demands as a means to prepare the atmosphere for the convening of the suggested international peace conference, which conference will ensure a just and lasting settlement of the Palestinian problem in all its aspects, bringing about the realization of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, peace and stability for the peoples of the region, and an end to violence and bloodshed:

1. To abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention and all other international agreements pertaining to the protection of civilians, their properties and rights under a state of military occupation; to declare the Emergency Regulations of the British Mandate null and void, and to stop applying the iron fist policy.

2. The immediate compliance with Security Council resolutions 605 and 607, which call upon Israel to abide by the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Declaration of Human Rights; and which further call for the achievement of a just and lasting settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

3. The release of all prisoners who were arrested during the recent uprising, and foremost among them our children. Also the rescinding of all proceedings and

indictments against them.

4. The cancellation of the policy of expulsion and allowing all exiled Palestinians, including the four sent yesterday into exile, to return to their homes and families. Also the release of all administrative detainees and the cancellation of the hundreds of house arrest orders. In this connection, special mention must be made of the several hundreds of applications for family reunions, which we call upon the authorities to accept forthwith.

5. The immediate lifting of the siege of all Palestinian refugee camps in the West Bank and Gaza, and the withdrawal of the Israeli army from all population centers.

6. Carrying out a formal inquiry into the behavior of soldiers and settlers in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as inside jails and detention camps, and taking due punitive measures against all those convicted of having unduly caused death or bodily harm to unarmed civilians.

7. A cessation of all settlement activity and land confiscation and the release of lands already confiscated, especially in the Gaza Strip. Also, putting an end to the harassments and provocations of the Arab population by settlers in the West Bank and Gaza as well as in the Old City of Jerusalem. In particular, the curtailment of the provocative activities in the Old City of Jerusalem by Sharon and the ultra-religious settlers of Shuvu Banim and Ateret Cohanim.

8. Refraining from any act which might impinge on the Muslim and Christian holy sites or which might introduce changes to the status quo in the city of Jerusalem.

9. The cancellation of the VAT and all other direct Israeli taxes which are imposed on Palestinian residents in

Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank, and in Gaza; and putting an end to the harassments caused to Palestinian business and tradesmen.

10. The cancellation of all restrictions on political freedoms, including the restrictions on meetings and conventions; also making provisions for free municipal elections under the supervision of a neutral authority.

11. The immediate release of all monies deducted from the wages of laborers from the territories who worked and still work inside the green line, which amount to several hundreds of millions of dollars. These accumulated deductions, with interest, must be returned to their rightful owners through the agency of the nationalist institutions headed by the workers' unions.

12. The removal of all restrictions on building permits and licenses for industrial projects and artesian wells as well as agricultural development programs in the occupied territories. Also rescinding all measures taken to deprive the territories of their water resources.

13. Terminating the policy of discrimination being practiced against industrial and agricultural produce from the occupied territories either by removing the restrictions on the transfer of goods to within the green line, or by placing comparable trade restrictions on the transfer of Israeli goods into the territories.

14. Removing the restrictions on political contacts between inhabitants of the occupied territories and the PLO, in such a way as to allow for the participation of Palestinians from the territories in the proceedings of the Palestine National Council, in order to ensure a direct input into the decision-making processes of the Palestinian nation by the Palestinians under occupation. ■

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Letter from the West Bank

The following is an excerpt from a letter sent from the West Bank by a young woman living here in the United States. She travelled to visit her family last spring, and in this part of the letter she describes the situation as she experienced it. Since then, conditions have become even more explosive and frightening.

May, 1988

Dear Aunt Salwa,

So much has happened in the week since I arrived here. Where do I begin?

The situation here is critical. Every night we hear gunshots as the Israeli soldiers round up more *shabab* [young men; informally, the "street"]. Yesterday, several teenagers were arrested by the soldiers. Every family in our village has been affected one way or another.

The Israeli soldiers are extremely cruel and show no mercy whatsoever. I attended a demonstration in Ramallah several days ago. I saw, with my own eyes, the beatings and cruelty our people receive at the hands of these evil people!

A large group of us had congregated at the Nasser mosque after the noon prayer. As we started chanting patriotic songs, the Israeli soldiers approached us and warned us to stop. When we refused, they began charging at us, hitting us with the butts of their guns and shooting at us. I must admit, that by this time I was so frightened, I dashed into a neighbor's yard. Many of our youth, however, started throwing rocks at the soldiers. The shooting became intense, and as I watched from behind a gate, I saw several soldiers severely beating a young man whom they had captured by shooting him in the leg. I could contain myself no longer; I approached the soldiers and begged them to stop. They cursed at me in Arabic, and as one soldier came towards me, I ran off again.

Aunt Salwa, the courage of our people is amazing. I have seen young girls and women hurl themselves on top of our *shabab* in order to protect them from the Israeli soldiers' beatings. People here are not afraid at all! In fact, they revel in defying the military government in every way possible.

Quite surprisingly, our people are well organized



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here. We have what is called an "Underground Resistance" which distributes flyers every week in each neighborhood. These flyers address our people in order to give them moral support and strength to continue the resistance and defiance of the military government. In addition, these flyers refer to specific courses of action our people must follow in order to defy the Israelis attempt to quell the uprising. For example, the flyers request our people to strike on certain days or to hold demonstrations in specific areas on certain days. They even warn our people of Israeli spies!

Despite the fact that the Israelis are doing everything within their power to make life miserable and unbearable for our people, it is truly an exhilarating experience to see a people without weapons defy and resist the "mighty and powerful" Israeli soldiers. It is as if our people have experienced an "awakening." The mood here is not depressing or sad, but rather, vital and strong. No one wants to revert back to the status quo under Israeli rule. The *Intifadah* [Uprising] has rejuvenated the will and spirit of our people.

Aunt Salwa, the situation here is even worse than what we, in the States, had imagined! Beatings and killings occur daily, travel is limited, the schools have been transformed into prisons for our youth. Israeli soldiers patrol the streets day and night, and people are beginning to experience the pangs of hunger. We have people approach our door daily to beg for money or food. Each of these women has lost a son or husband to

the cause.

Today, as I was walking home from a friend's house, I saw Israeli soldiers clashing with a crowd of women in front of the entrance to the Amary camp. I wanted to see what was going on, and as I approached them, the women grabbed me and pleaded with me to speak with the Captain. They said that their sons were beaten and dragged from their homes while asleep. I saw the boys, clad in their pajamas, with their hands tied and eyes blindfolded. I asked the Captain to please release them. He told me that they were suspects in a rock throwing incident in the camp. After about an hour of pleading and begging, the Captain told us that he would release the boys at nightfall.

In a few minutes I will be on my way to attend a funeral for a young *shaheed* [martyr] who died yesterday evening. The Israelis caught him throwing rocks in Ramallah. They beat and tortured him and then fired a tear gas cannister into his mouth! As he lay dying in the Ramallah hospital, he wrote on a piece of paper (his tongue and throat were parched), "Please tell my mother not to cry, for I die a shaheed."

The torture that the Israeli soldiers inflict on our *shabab* is something beyond cruelty! They smash in their heads, break their arms and legs and often beat them to death. We heard that in Nablus recently, a soldier placed a young baker in his oven and then dipped him in ice cold water. The baker died.

When you look into the Israeli soldiers' eyes, you see nothing but cruelty and hatred. They laugh and joke among themselves as they squash our youth! The anger inside me is tremendous.

The military government ruled recently that any young boy under age twelve who was caught throwing rocks would no longer be charged and arrested; rather his father would be responsible, and therefore, charged and arrested.

The Israeli soldiers have taken over a school nearby my Aunt Wafa's house. We can see them on top of the school building, making fun of the villagers and acting like crude barbarians. They undress and urinate into the water wells and pipes in front of all!

The merchants are just as brave as the young boys. The Israeli soldiers become furious when the merchants go on strike. The *Munathemah* [National Resistance] designates certain days and hours within the week for the merchants to strike. The Israeli soldiers threaten the merchants with beatings unless they open their doors. Despite these beatings, however, if the *Munathemah*

says they must go on strike, they listen.

I was in Ramallah the other day. It was amazing to see the hustle and bustle of the city come alive! All the merchants were selling their wares and it almost seemed like everything was normal. By 12:00 p.m., however, a tenseness gripped the city; the Israeli soldiers had arrived! The military government was furious at our people for opening their stores and the marketplace during illegal hours. It is truly a game in which the mouse outsmarts the cat! If the military government decrees that the merchants should open their doors from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., for example, our people, in defiance, sell their wares from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.!

The merchants hurriedly locked their doors, and the vendors in the marketplace started packing their fruits and vegetables into their trucks. Unfortunately, not before several vendors received beatings and threats at the hands of the soldiers.

The merchants and vendors have begun operating out of their homes. You can buy meat, fruit and almost everything from their homes. It is not very convenient, but at least we are able to buy these items even when there is a strike.

The weather here is perfect! People here no longer take long walks in the evenings to take advantage of the cool breeze; they are too afraid of the Israeli soldiers. But we do a lot of walking during the day time. We keep our doors locked, day and night; it is so strange to call upon my relatives and find their doors locked shut so I must ring the door bell. Although our people are truly courageous, they take the necessary precautions.

Our people are particularly afraid of the settlers. The settlers carry guns and enjoy terrorizing the villagers. Young boys no longer walk alone; they must walk in groups. Recently a group of settlers kidnapped a twelve year old boy, shot him to death and removed his eyes, kidneys and liver. The settlers also break into people's homes, smash their furniture and belongings, and often beat the inhabitants.

Yet despite all this, our people continue to resist. As another young boy lay dying in the Ramallah hospital, he said to his mother and father, "You are both still young. You must make many more boys to fight the Israeli soldiers and replenish those of us who have died."

* * *

A Historical Note: Palestine and Israel

The basic elements of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict began when Zionists—guided by the dream of building an exclusively Jewish state and with the help of major world powers—created Israel on land that was occupied by another people, the Palestinians. In 1948, a combination of imperial designs and a well-warranted sympathy for the plight of European Jewry after the Holocaust helped generate enough support for Israel's creation.

Since its origins, the history of Israel has been one of continually usurping more and more of the Palestinians land. Beginning in 1948, when the United Nations Partition Plan established Israel, it arbitrarily gave the European Zionists 56.47% of the land, even though they only comprised a third of the population and had previously owned only 7% of the land. In the ensuing 1948 war, Israel gained control of 80% of Palestine, and in the June War of 1967 Israel occupied the remainder of Palestine: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.



Accompanying Israel's continual expansion has been a continual erosion of Palestinian rights. Today, the occupied territories are in permanent legal limbo. They have no protection under Israeli law, no protection under Jordanian law. This is because in ruling the occupied territories, the Israelis have reverted back to the "Emergency Laws" originally created by the British colonial authorities to suppress anti-colonial organizing including some of the Zionists' own activities. Back then, Chaim Shapiro, who later became Israeli Justice Minister, described the laws as being "worse than anything Hitler could have dreamt up." But today the Israelis are applying these laws to their fullest, repressive extent.

Of course, it isn't hard to find material incentives for the current occupation. For one, it provides Israel with a vast labor pool and a captive market not unlike the Bantustans in South Africa. Every day, more than 150,000 Palestinians pass into Israel from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to do menial jobs and then return at night because they are prohibited from staying over. And the occupation has given Israel a further arena to expand its land base at the expense of the Palestinians. By now, for instance, Israel has acquired one third of the territory of the Gaza strip. It has come to the point where the Palestinians living in the eight refugee camps in the Gaza Strip occupy only .006 acres per person, the highest population density in the entire world.

Still, Israel's continued expansion has also produced a clearly unstable and explosive situation. And Israel's growing problems are not confined to the occupied territories. December's one-day general strike by many of the 645,000 Palestinians who live and work in Israel proper was not only a statement of solidarity with their brethren in the occupied territories; it was also an expression of severe dissatisfaction with their status as second class citizens in Israel. As the current uprising highlights, there is only so long an occupation like this one can work without facing open rebellion.

—Bob Petersen

Bob Petersen is a Milwaukee school teacher and an editor of Rethinking Schools who follows Middle Eastern affairs.



Khalil Raad Collection



Above left: the Jaffa orange has become a symbol of Israel's claim that only the Jews could make the desert bloom. In fact, Palestinians had cultivated the orange before Zionist colonization had gotten underway and it was not until after 1948 that Jewish production caught up to Palestinian production.

Above right: The Israeli drive to expand their territorial control has been a constant reality. In the final weeks before the end of British rule in Palestine, the Hagannah (a wing of the Zionist military at the time) drove tens of thousands of Palestinians from the villages of Western Galilee. This region lay outside the boundaries of the Jewish state envisioned by the UN resolution of November 29, 1947.

Bottom right: The Israelis have adopted many of the tactics the British colonial authorities formerly used to suppress anti-colonial organizing. A typical British measure was to blow up the houses of "suspects" and their relatives.



Institute for Palestine Studies

New Phase for the Rainbow

Summer-time, and activists' thoughts this year turn to conventions, elections and new lesser-evils-to-come. With Contragate, the Arias plan, the stock market crash, Noriega and Meese, a series of events over the last year closed off a political era. Not a moment too soon for any of us, the man himself will ride off into the sunset. But it is not just what is no more on the right; it is also what may be coming over the horizon to the left. Above all, Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign and its close relation to progressive causes from coast to coast evoked a change in political climate in the United States.

The last ten years have been an uphill battle against right-wing hegemony. But elements of grass roots organizing managed to take hold. Consider the labor anti-concessions battles. Focusing on fairly traditional segments of the organized working class, these battles have grown from last-ditch efforts to survive into wider challenges to the AFL-CIO pro-corporate growth philosophies. The Supreme Court's recent re-legitimizing of secondary boycott activity perhaps can symbolize the end of the anti-mass action labor politics of our era.

A new student movement with its own sources of militancy and determination has also broken through the "Big Chill." Anti-apartheid, anti-CIA, anti-racism organizing on campus have all further challenged the 1980s corporate complacency and culture.

The gay rights movement—which gained steam during the Reagan era where other struggles slowed down—and the women's, peace, anti-intervention, and environmental movements have added to the moral authority of the challenge.

But it has been the 1980s Black electoral movement, the Rainbow, and Jackson's two campaigns which have spearheaded a turn to a more self-confident challenge of corporate-dominated political power. Its effect on labor has been tremendous. A year ago, who could predict that Jackson would be able to stave off another depressing AFL-CIO endorsement? Yet that has come to pass and more.

If Jackson managed to catch some of these waves, the campaign itself was felt deep in each of the major political movements. In 1988, from one corner of the country to another, it has aroused active constituencies and enlarged potential ones. Together, the campaigns and the Rainbow pushed populist sentiment in a pro-equality direction, made a tremendous stir within the ranks of labor, and had a unifying impact on progressive activists.

Strengthen the Rainbow presence

As Jackson's success has grown, so have the pressures on him to go mainstream. The launching of a Jesse Jackson Political Action Committee and some other recent mainstream moves raise questions. Will the Rainbow Coalition continue to be open to radical engagement from below? (Other events, like Jackson's surprise visit to imprisoned IRA member Joe Doherty in New York, give other, still very positive signs.) For progressives who have joined in and built the Rainbow in so many different contexts across the country, now is the time to evaluate new directions. If the Rainbow is still the way to go, we should use and build on it to create new events. If Jesse Jackson's past is a guide, his participation and assistance will take care of itself.

Holding together a Rainbow Coalition is today the best hope for national-level progressive struggle. Though it certainly has its shortcomings, the Rainbow phenomenon has three things going for it.

First, the Rainbow and the Black electoral wave where it arose were unique in breaking through the pattern of scattered, defensive resistance to Reaganism. We need this strength now when Contragate, the stock market crash and other factors signal a possible faster-paced mass resistance.

Second, Jackson's campaign symbolizes empowerment and populist redistribution of power. National in scope, rooted in the Black struggle but with ties to most political movements, the Rainbow is in a good position



The Rainbow-labor connection will have a long-term impact on the balance between traditional and new labor leadership.

to provide the crest of a new wave of mass radicalization.

Third, Rainbow politics arose against the backdrop of the final collapse of the AFL-CIO and other corporate liberal post-war strategies. Against their failure, the Rainbow began with a historic condition for popular unity in the US—the leading role of the Black freedom struggle. *An overall perspective for progressive organizing should be to build the Rainbow's independent strength, extend its independent culture, and deepen its independent politics.*

Post-election demobilizations usually can't be resisted head-on, and the natural tendency will be for the Rainbow Coalition, Inc. to become a left activist network, another coalition among coalitions. *To keep the Rainbow alive as a mass force, activists should use the Rainbow Coalition umbrella to build the struggle, and bring the struggle under the Rainbow umbrella.* The Na-

tional Rainbow Coalition is not in a position to replace other organizations—labor, student or otherwise—but, riding on Jackson's success, it can be a bridge to continued mass mobilization. The Rainbow remains well positioned to bring constituencies, activists, and organizations together—for labor progress, a revitalized peace movement, a frontal assault on racist violence.

Reclaim the Issue of Equality

The Reagan-era wave of racist violence and the growing grass roots response to it highlight a critical contradiction in this year's Jackson campaign. For the Left, Jackson's message shifted somewhat from '84 to '88, and not always for the better.

In his comments on the Howard Beach, New York mob attack and elsewhere, Jackson appears to many to have watered down his message. The worst part of this is that it comes at a time when the Black movement is seriously picking up steam against racial violence both in cities and on college campuses. Jackson's stress on the similarity of white and Black economic conditions, his suggestion in the South that the civil rights battles have been won, and his calls for racial healing in the North, do little for the activist Black Left now in motion.

In raising this, it is important to emphasize the strong objective side to the campaign's impact. Having a progressive Black leader inside if not dominating the presidential debate gives all progressives, including Black activists, a buffer for organizing which has been sorely missed during most of these seven lean years of Reaganism. Also, we have to be wary of applying terms of left analysis like economism to people like Jackson or trends like his campaign that are not of the Left. And we have to be wary of condemning the front ranks of the Black movement nationally for not confronting racism more emphatically when no white segment of the movement is raising any comparable voice for democratic rights.

What enabled the Jackson campaigns to galvanize the progressive movements as a whole has been the acknowledged leadership of the Black movement at the head of the progressive camp. This in turn grew from the '84 Rainbow's "Southern Strategy" of voter registration drives and campaign against the Southern dual primary. Jackson's success in 1988 equally centered on a solid Black South on Super Tuesday.

An editorial two years ago ("Get Ready for '88," *FM* October 1986) argued that the key to a qualitatively different Jackson campaign this time was a programmatic

orientation toward labor. As an accompanying article put it, "Jackson needs labor...almost as much as labor needs Jackson." We think this orientation proved correct: the Rainbow-labor combination has meshed the Jackson campaign with labor struggles from Watsonville and Hormel to Jay, Maine and brought a spirit of equality to them. We can expect that this evolving relation will have a long term impact on the balance of forces between traditional and new labor leadership.

Yet a potentially one-sided thrust against "economic violence" and other such slogans is what could flow naturally from the Jackson campaign now. This may be a useful lever against the technocratic conservatism either Bush or Dukakis will offer. But within the campaign, the cat and mouse game between Jackson and Dukakis in June and July over the vice presidency partly reflects the pressure from below of Jackson's Black movement base. The issue of justice in offering Jackson a spot on the ticket came up at the Urban League convention, with the Congressional Black Caucus, and elsewhere, reflecting a grass roots feeling at odds with the Democrats' old rules of the game. *If the Rainbow doesn't reclaim the issue of equality and reunite with the mass-based campaigns of the Black movement, it is finished.*

We should look for a qualitative change in the relation of the Black movement to the progressive bloc as a whole. The question "what does Jesse Jackson want?" may have made us wince for its patronizing and biased inference. But in 1988, to some degree, it stood in for the question, what does the new Black movement want? The question is reminiscent of cartoons and editorials from 1960 or so wondering where the Civil Rights sit-ins were headed.

New Strength From Below

A new political shift in favor of Black movement leadership could be one of tremendous consequences. No more stage-managed Solidarity Days with various token representatives invited onto the union leaders' platforms. We have the first chance in a generation for labor to excite people, just as Jackson helped various anti-concessions battles develop a feeling of being in a national movement.

This shift is one of several changes in relations of social forces that could characterize the years ahead. To make the most of them, the Rainbow forces need to rebalance electoral and grass roots organizing. This is not a question of abandoning electoral politics. Serious Black,

other minority, and progressive coalition campaigns will probably continue to spread to new locales, small and large (New York City, against Koch?), North, South and West. But just as in the Jackson campaign itself, these campaigns will likely become more mainstream and less cutting edge. *As a lever of change nationally, the electoral tide has probably crested for a year or two, and the movement needs to draw new strength from below.*

Jackson's campaigns have expressed electorally a much greater willingness to "unite and fight" the abuses of Reaganism than mainstream wisdom said existed. But to begin to force social change, these alliances need to be tested and deepened on the ground. The constituency Jackson activated needs to clarify the future of Rainbow-type alliances: can they reshape *practically* the battle over concessions, so-called welfare reform, women's rights, peace? This should be much more possible now that world events have knocked some of the stuffing out of Reaganism and the Right.

Where will such a mass politics fit with what we can expect from, yes, a possible Dukakis administration? Dukakis has run as the efficient general manager, not beholden to any special interest groups. (Aside from his treatment of Jackson, Dukakis' line-up of possible vice presidential nominees was notable for its white male insider quality.) *Like both the technocrat Carter and the ideologue Reagan, but more so than either, Dukakis seems to be signaling he is available to be a servant to the entire ruling class.* The incredible fund-raising machine he put together in just one year indicates his message got through. If this becomes the predominant liberal mood, the need and the opportunity for an independent, nationally-organized Rainbow could be greater than ever.

Finally, no socialist movement is going to make it in the U.S. without a new electoral party. Where new ground can be gained locally or nationally through electoral campaigns, the activist Left should take part. But it is not enough for activists to keep repeating that the Left can't proclaim a party. We have to help show how to climb the ladder hand over hand to get there. We have just gone up one hand: a phase of electoral self-identification like this one reveals potentials, expresses the excitement of new alliances, opens the door to unity in struggle. But now we need another hand up (a "left" hand?) of mass struggle to sharpen the popular social bloc as new objective conditions present themselves. ■

—Freedom Road Socialist Organization, National Executive, 6/88

New Reveille for Radicals

The Left and the Jackson Presidential Campaign

by Susan Connor

I worked on the 1988 Jackson presidential campaign in my Congressional district containing a small city and a mix of working class and wealthier suburbs. It is over 90% white and predominantly Democratic. It had virtually no Jackson campaign in 1984.

We managed to generate quite a bit of activity, considering our limited resources. We sent people to other states to canvass, we did a couple of days in our district, we organized work at the polls, we placed several articles in local papers, and we raised money. We developed a list of several hundred supporters, about half of whom did at least some work on the campaign. As a result, Jackson got enough votes in our district to earn representation at the Convention, as he did in most of the districts in our state. This was much better than had been expected. Finally, we brought together a core of activists who have shown an interest in staying together for future work.

The main reason for this success was the momentum built by the Jackson campaign nationally and his strong showings in earlier primaries. The work of the campaign in our district was definitely a secondary factor. But the results of our efforts were positive, and measurable in concrete ways, and everybody associated with the campaign was very high on the work.

Support for Jackson in New Places

The Jackson vote in the district represented a significant growth in support for a progressive candidate among unionized workers. At the beginning we had as our minimal goal to "get a hearing" for Jackson among labor. But in the six month period before the primary, support for Jackson went way beyond this as he won active support among many white union activists. Among rank-and-filers, it seemed that the more active people were in their union, the more likely they were to

Susan Connor is a trade union and community activist.

support Jackson. Jackson probably got the vote of 40% of the shop stewards in one predominantly white plant. The union activists were more political, more likely to follow the debates, and found themselves impressed with Jackson's populist, pro-labor positions. The typical comments even among center forces changed from "I wouldn't trust a Black guy as president" to "He sure is the only one speaking for labor." The fact that a few of the elected union officials worked hard for Jackson early on helped make it acceptable to come out for Jackson, and brought some Black workers actively into the campaign. The fact that there was no other Mondale or Humphrey-type candidate with establishment labor credentials helped too.

Jackson also got the McGovern vote, or a good chunk of it. He did as well in the petit-bourgeois communities as he did in the working class areas. Here he was helped by two factors. First, disaffected liberal Democrats who were not going to vote for Dukakis really had no other choice but Jackson. In the working class areas, Gephardt got a significant vote, although less than Jackson's. But there was virtually no Gephardt vote in the wealthier towns. Gephardt's protectionism had little appeal to these avid consumers. And if petit-bourgeois voters were against Dukakis because he was not liberal enough on some social issues, Gephardt certainly could not be seen as a viable alternative.

Second, though this was a strong Dukakis state, the Dukakis machine itself was not very well organized in these towns. In the working class areas, the Dukakis poll-watchers typically were elected officials who knew practically everybody. But in some of the smaller and wealthier towns there were polls where Dukakis had incomplete or even no coverage at all.

The Black community in the district is small. The Black leadership is tied in pretty closely with the Democratic machine and the mayor. Some of the area's Black leaders hold contracts for government services and generally keep a low profile. The local NAACP did not support Jackson very actively. Probably the best thing we could have done would have been to get some Black elected officials from other parts of the state who were active in the campaign to call them. Our own efforts to get them more active failed. As a result, the main Jackson activists in the Black community were Black workers in the area. There was no voter registration activity in the Black community by the campaign, which was a major drawback in our work.

There is a large gay and lesbian organization in the

area which, although not politically active itself, does have some politically active leaders. We failed to get them involved despite many attempts, apparently because they were overextended. Nevertheless, some gay activists did get involved, especially after they found that Jackson was taking the same position on gay rights in Jay, Maine, that he took at the National Gay Rights march.

In addition to the positive results of our efforts to build the Jackson vote, we were able to bring together people from different progressive social movements, in particular labor, peace, community activists, and to a lesser extent the Black and gay movements. Many of these people were progressives who were excited by the Jackson campaign as they had been by nothing else in many years. A lot of them had been plugging along in this nuclear freeze committee or that union and were thrilled to meet activists from other movements. And many of them were very competent and experienced. It was exciting to see an idea develop and be implemented by people who know how to organize. There were some new working class people who had little organizing experience who became involved as well. If the type of activists who got involved here were typical of other places, the campaign was like a reveille for radicals, and it is no wonder the campaign was able to come together so well across the country with no money.

Reaping the Rewards of Electoral Work

Electoral work has a lot to offer the Left. It involves broad mass work, going door-to-door, talking to strangers about political issues. To think about getting votes and winning an election, you simply have to break out of the conservative and small-group mentality that retards a lot of the Left. The work has specific stages and endpoints, and the results are concrete and easily measured. This is also good for a left-wing that seems to have been stuck in neutral during much of the Reagan years. And a national campaign like this one, with a candidate like Jackson, is an ideal vehicle to propagate our pro-equality populist outlook, and lift our heads away from the particular day-to-day work we are generally involved in.

A big problem of electoral work is that there is an inevitable ebb after the election, especially if you do not win. You have to expect this, and keep it in mind each day of the campaign in an effort to consolidate the people you are able to bring forward. But the falling away is going to happen to some degree, just by the nature of

the work.

More fundamentally, there certainly is something to the Solidarity [a socialist organization—ed.] criticism of working in the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party historically has been the vehicle for the establishment to draw every social movement into bourgeois channels, make it as reformist and narrow as possible, and make sure that it never reaches its goals. This is especially true this time around with Jackson, since there is no talk whatsoever about a third party, and it seems that Jackson himself is very committed to the Democratic Party. The powers that be in the campaign surely know what they're doing, and it surely isn't all we are doing. There is the danger of all the work and progress of the campaign being turned into its opposite and coming to nothing.

Having acknowledged this, however, we can figure out an approach that reflects the difference between revolutionary and reformist political work and which takes these problems into account. It is really critical that we sit down and think about this from time to time, because it's very easy to get caught up in the spontaneous course of events. It comes down to how you fight for reforms, and electoral work is no different than a lot of other kinds of political work.

The Rainbow Program

Rainbow activists need to keep a clear focus on three things (at least): 1) an anti-capitalist intermediate program, 2) building some kind of political space for the Left and, if possible, an intermediate organization around the program, and 3) building socialist organization. The first was pretty much taken care of by Jackson, the second hangs in the balance, and the third remains an unrealized potential.

A candidate like Jackson who comes out of the Black movement and actively supports so many progressive struggles by his very nature brings a much broader dimension to electoral work. When I hear Jackson talking about the corporations and agri-business as "barracudas" it brings back memories of certain Maoist spokesmen from the '70s talking about "vampires," and "bloodsuckers." So first, as far as program, short of socialism I can't find much wrong with his program which is an assortment of progressive populist positions in the interests of working and oppressed peoples. The campaign has been a vehicle for promoting many of the issues we have been active around all along including la-

bor, gay rights and anti-interventionism. And lo and behold we find out that millions of people agree with us!

The biggest problem with Jackson's politics has been his position that the battleground has shifted from racial violence to economic violence. It is almost inevitable that he would tend to do this as he reaches out to white workers. But the fact is that as the political essence of his campaign changed from Black empowerment in '84 to a populist realignment of American politics in '88, he began to say some things that simply are not true. Jackson sometimes seems to imply that the struggle for Black liberation is over. He downplays the growing gap between the economic and political situation of the poor Black masses and the Black professional and small business strata. As a result, Jackson has run into some flack from Black activists who feel that Jackson ultimately speaks for only part of the Black community.

Jackson's decision to focus on issues of economic injustice has some justification, of course. Some of the democratic goals of the civil rights movement were, in fact, achieved in the '50s, '60s and '70s, including the destruction of most Jim Crow laws and many of the barriers against the right to vote for Black people. But the fact is that racial violence is not over at all. And the "legal channels" that Jackson mentions as the remedy for the violence which still does exist may be there, but by and large they do not work. The struggle for the right to vote in the Black Belt South is not over even in its most elementary form, as repression against Black voter activists in the South recently has shown. Nor, for that matter, is it a moot point in the North, where restrictive voter registration practices still make it very difficult for the Black and poor to exercise their right to vote.

This problem in the campaign could be ignored or prettified, which would be wrong. It could also be overblown. After all, Jackson is not exactly running as Ed Brooke [former moderate Black Republican Senator from Massachusetts—ed.]. The Rainbow concept—recognition of different interests in a unified struggle—is a more accurate and progressive formula than the integrationist outlook of the early 1960s. Jackson has not renounced his roots in the Black movement and continues to mobilize his Black base, and this is hardly lost on white workers. The fact that he has done as well as he has among white voters while compromising so little on so many issues—from opposing protectionism to advocating a Palestinian state to supporting gay rights—represents a major victory. The anti-concessions activists from Watsonville, California to Austin, Min-

nesota to Jay, Maine have flocked to Jackson's campaign. As a Black political figure promoting the interests of workers, his campaign represents a major advance in uniting labor's divided house despite his downplaying of the independent Black movement.

The Rainbow Coalition

Second, the reception that Jackson's program got from the American people in 1988, and the numbers and many types of activists who came out to work in his campaign, should tell us that it is important to build the Rainbow Coalition as a national organization. There is no other place where left activists in the different social movements can come together; it has nation-wide potential; it is the organizational embodiment of a pro-equality populism; it allows us to do electoral work without disappearing completely into the Democratic Party; and it already has some presence. We should think of the Rainbow Coalition as an umbrella group which can involve activists whose main work is in their own particular social movement. The Rainbow Coalition itself may get involved in a local community issue or in local or state-wide electoral campaigns. In many cases it may serve a largely educational purpose, sponsoring public forums with speakers from different struggles. Of course, the conditions for building the Rainbow Coalition will differ widely in different locations. In a few places you have Rainbow Coalitions that are already functioning well. More often the Rainbow is weak or non-existent or is plagued by sectarian forces or other internal problems.

One of the biggest problems with trying to build the Rainbow Coalition is that it depends so much on things outside our control. For example, it would be a crippling blow if Jesse Jackson decides that there isn't going to be any real effort to build the organization. (This does not look likely at this time.) Many Black politicians will have little interest in supporting the organization actively since they are already tied into the Democratic Party or their own political organizations and may not see the political need for it. But there are people like Ron Daniels and the NCIPA (National Committee for Independent Political Action) grouping who can be counted on to work on it.

For socialists, a third focus for work in the Jackson campaign—building socialist organization—is a critical one. Unless we gain new people to make an organized commitment to socialism, we will continue to be frustrated by the limitations of what can be accomplished in the first two areas. Activists who have worked with socialists in the Jackson campaign may like us as individuals and respect our contributions to the work, but this is not enough to make them want to join a socialist organization. This will require special attention and special work, day in and day out.

The 1988 Jackson camp has already changed the political landscape of the U.S. And it served as a wake-up call to Leftists across the country. Whether the potential of these developments is realized or not depends on the nature of our work before and after the convention and beyond. For a Left which has been traumatized by two terms of Reagan reaction, these are good problems to have. ■

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The Questions of Change

by Ayofemi Stowe

When I first agreed to work with the Jackson Presidential campaign, I remember asking myself, "Why are you doing this?" Simply put, I wanted to make a difference. Jesse Jackson is the first Presidential candidate in twenty years who represents the values that made me join my first march and who speaks to the issues that concern gays and lesbians, blacks, workers, and all of us who care about world peace, the environment, and civil rights. As I have watched the political machine move toward the nominating convention in July, my initial question has generated numerous others. In this article, I hope to at least expose many of the questions that remain unanswered, so that I can begin to implement the changes they imply.

I admit that my answer to that very first question was based partially on sentimentality. I remembered the marching and demonstrations, the violence and murders that had been required to accomplish the Voting Rights Act of 1965. As a thirty-eight-year-old black lesbian, I have always chosen to participate in electoral politics precisely because historically voting was a right that had been so vehemently denied black people and women. At the same time, I have continued to support the kinds of direct action and civil disobedience that created the Voting Rights Act in the first place.

I also asked myself, "Isn't voting in the Presidential election really an exercise in selecting the lesser of two evils?" In fact, my vote only elects someone to the electoral college which actually chooses the President. In fact, the President will have to negotiate implementing his policies in a system that divides the power between the Executive (The President), Legislative (Congress), and Judicial (The Supreme Court) branches. My vote for a member of Congress directly elects two Senators and a Congressional Representative who may make the difference in a crucial vote. Jesse Jackson, even if elected, could not ultimately affect our lives without essential cooperation from Congress and the Supreme Court.

One lesson from this campaign is that I was reminded

of all the individuals who make decisions about my life because I have elected them to office, from county supervisors and school board officials to the governor and state senators. To focus exclusively on the national election without maintaining vigilant watch allows local officials to veto funds for AIDS education and research or conservative initiatives like the California Proposition 69 (that would require the quarantine of persons with AIDS) to gain momentum.

When I asked myself, "What can I do?" I realized that I have gathered a useful toolkit of community organizing and writing skills that I wanted to contribute to the Jackson campaign. I was confident that I could develop and implement a media strategy to support Jackson's candidacy and ultimate victory in the California primary election. My task in the California Jackson campaign headquarters was labeled "media liaison/press secretary." Naively, I believed the slogans of the campaign which promised "bold leadership/new directions."

Instead, I found myself trapped in the same power struggles that I have always associated with mainstream politics. The men who were responsible for the daily operations of the campaign jealously hoarded and controlled power. I could not perform the job I was hired to do, because I was not given access to the necessary information: I was not consulted before press releases were sent out, I was not given information that was necessary to develop a basic media kit, nor was I even told where the press room was going to be located until the day of Jackson's arrival in Southern California. It was expedient to relegate a fat woman to less important areas of responsibility or to take credit for work actually done by her.

Like generations of women bullied by men in power, I began to doubt my own abilities. Later I learned that the woman who replaced me as media liaison was subjected to the same sexist disrespect and double-talk, causing her to ultimately resign.

I watched daily decisions to compromise ethics and

integrity, from promises made with no intentions of honoring them to affixing union seals to work completed in non-union shops. It became more important to organize large fund-raisers with prominent businessmen than to acknowledge the contributions collected by women in their church organizations. The promise of the Rainbow Coalition working together as a grassroots groundswell of support was never realized, partially because of the contempt these men expressed for those traditionally locked-out individuals.

I have agonized about when and how to expose the reality of the California campaign, because I believe that Jackson genuinely embraces the principles and issues that are its foundation. However, I believe that he must be held accountable for those individuals to whom he entrusted the daily operation of his Presidential bid. I decided that I could not remain silent when the same sexist attitudes affecting me meant that a woman with experience from the 1984 Jackson campaign was ignored while a man with no particular experience was hired and given responsibility for precisely those tasks in which she had expertise. My compromise was to write this article when it could not be used to hurt the current campaign effort but it might help us to answer some of my concerns about the values and ethics it reflects.

Incompetence is particularly intolerable when it is created by the perpetuation of oppressive attitudes. Men were placed in positions of responsibility in the campaign to repay political debts. They reinforced a standard that gauged thin heterosexual males as more competent and more qualified than anyone lacking one of those credentials. As a fat lesbian, I was absolutely the last person to get either respect or even just the basic information necessary to do my job. The fact that this oppressive behavior was coming from men of color made it even more difficult to accept. I know that the Jackson Presidential campaign did not have to use the same oppressive models to be effective.

The question that finally must be answered is: what

are our long-term strategies for creating and maintaining the kinds of values we want in the society we structure? No answer to this question is simple, but I know that choosing a single strategy of any description will probably not achieve the desired goal. Sadly, many local grassroots organizations were so focused on providing support to Jackson's campaign that they lost their own momentum. Specific issues on their organizational agenda were sidetracked for lack of attention. Individual members were too exhausted to effectively continue their commitments. An example of this is the March on Sacramento for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which was held on May 7. It turned into a Jesse Jackson rally, with marchers chanting, "Win, Jesse, Win!" instead of the opportunity to challenge local legislators to become accountable around AIDS funding and a time "to bring the message home" from the March on Washington last October as organizers of the march had advertised.

Despite the disappointments and questions that remain from this experience, I have reached some conclusions by working with the Jackson campaign. I know that coalition work is a compromise of individual goals to achieve a common goal that meets the needs of all members of the coalition. I think the Rainbow Coalition, with its stripes of people of color, working class people, differently-abled people, and gay men and lesbians, deserves an environment of integrity and a commitment to a real equal partnership, not just lip-service agreement to those principles. It is unacceptable to import oppressive means to achieve impressive ends. It really is a question of change. ■

Khandiz Ayofemi Stowe has performed as an actress and musician with the National Black Theatre in New York City and she is now writing an autobiographical collection of short stories. She lives in Los Angeles, where she has given benefit readings for Black, gay and lesbian, and women's institutions. See her interview with Bernice Reagon in the July 1987 FM.

BOOK REVIEW

Taking on General Motors

A Case Study of the UAW Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuys Open

by Eric Mann

UCLA Institute of Industrial Relations, 1988, 408 pages, \$22.00

Paradigm or Parochialism? Labor Struggle at General Motors Van Nuys:

by Peter Olney

There will be no long wait for the movie based on the book, *Taking on General Motors*. This time, the movie not only precedes the book, but is an integral part of the campaign to keep GM's Van Nuys plant open which the book chronicles. In a telling moment in the movie, community and labor leaders report back to the workers of United Auto Workers Local 645 on the results of their historic meeting with F. James McDonald, President of General Motors, in January of 1984. Reverend Frank Higgins, leader of the Baptist Ministers Conference of greater Los Angeles with its over three hundred largely Black parishes, takes the microphone and—obviously irritated with General Motors' treatment of the community—declares "When we sat down to meet with McDonald he walked in there talking to us as if we were children, but he left knowing that he had a tiger by the tail." The movie, *Tiger By The Tail*, (also written by Eric Mann) takes its name from this moment.

Market, Media and Mexicanos

While the early chapters of the book present a detailed historical look at the corporation and its relationship with the UAW, Mann's most striking contribution is the chronicle of a strategy that was finely fitted to the actual social, political and economic conditions of this auto plant situated in the San Fernando Valley just north of downtown Los Angeles.

What are the elements of the successful strategy that transformed the workers of this assembly plant from the next submissive victim in GM's campaign of corporate consolidation into a "tiger by the tail" able to resist an industrial Goliath?

A large part of the brilliance of the Van Nuys effort is attention to local conditions. This is a battle set in the Los Angeles of the 1980s. Seasoned civil rights and anti-war activists, in-plant colonizers with se-

Peter Olney is a labor activist in the Los Angeles area and a member of the Steering Committee of the Community/Labor Coalition to Keep GM Van Nuys Open.

niority and respect, teamed up with the Chicano local union leadership to fashion a strategy based on three very critical factors: market, media and Mexicanos. The driving spirit of the effort underlying these three M's is the perspective of workers as organizers and strategists, not as victims. The campaign asserted that workers and the community must have a say in the future of an auto plant that was constructed in the San Fernando Valley some 40 years ago and around which a whole community has sprung up. The weapon in enforcing the maintenance of the plant was to be a Los Angeles County boycott of GM products. If and when the corporation closed the plant, then the Labor/Community Coalition to Keep GM Van Nuys Open would launch a county-wide boycott of General Motors products.

But who would take seriously a boycott threat against a leviathan like General Motors? Boycotts are too often called as a last resort by already defeated unions. The Campaign did its homework and utilized the following three handles in the fight to preserve the plant and make the boycott threat real:

Market: The Van Nuys boycott threat is based on an astute analysis of both the potential sales volume damage of a boycott and the potentially more severe consumer image damage that could reverberate throughout the nation.

Los Angeles County has a population of 10 million people and—as the freeway capital of the world—is the largest new car market in America. In 1985, GM sold more cars in Los Angeles county than it did in the states of Arizona, New Mexico, Oregon and Nevada combined. Furthermore, two GM models, the sporty Fiero and the Corvette, had higher relative market shares in Los Angeles than the rest of the country.

In that same model year of 1985, however, GM's market share in California as a whole dipped to 26% versus a nationwide market share of 41%. This dip in market share was even more pronounced in Los Angeles County. This eroding consumer base in California as a whole and LA in particular was of great concern to General Motors. As Lee Iacocca puts it in his self-aggrandizing biography, "They may be crazy in Los Angeles, but whatever the craze, it eventually spreads to the rest of the country." General Motors needs Los Angeles.

Media: Obviously skillful management of the media is crucial to any attempt to rally community support and pressure against a giant like General Motors. Here the campaign excelled, even generating its own documentary movie.

Los Angeles is the number two media market in America and is loaded with Hollywood stars. Many Hollywood entertainers, when convinced of the legitimacy of a movement, are willing to lend their considerable personal prestige to a social cause. Ed Asner, ex-President of the Screen Actors Guild and himself an autoworker in his youth, was a public spokesperson for the movement and narrates the movie, *Tiger by the Tail*. Coverage in the business press and on national television converted GM Van Nuys from a local phenomenon to a matter of concern and interest to the nation as a whole.

Mexicanos: Los Angeles County is the third largest Spanish-speaking metropolis in the world. The San Fernando Valley where the plant is located has a high percentage of Latino residents. The GM Van Nuys facility has a 51% Chicano worker population, and at the time of the battles that Mann describes, the president of the local was a Chicano, Pete Beltran, who entered the plant out of high school.

The preservation of the plant became more than a question of jobs. It was seen as a battle to preserve a very important Latino political organization, Local 645 of the UAW, which among other things has long been active in support of the farmworkers and the Mexican American Political Association. More recently, the local organized 1,200 Latino immigrant workers at an aluminum rim plant in Van Nuys that is a major supplier to the auto industry.

The involvement of Latin community leaders and religious figures with the campaign highlights the intertwining of community economic and political interests with the defense of 4,500 jobs at an auto plant. Listen to the words of Catholic Bishop Juan Arzube at a community/labor/religious meeting in the fall of 1983:

GM has said that it plans to close down this plant and move away. But the question is: are they moving because the plant does not bring them profits, or because they believe they can make greater profits somewhere else? I believe the latter is the case. So the issue really at stake is this: does GM have a responsibility to the community that has supported them for thirty-seven years; and does GM have a responsibility to the thousands of workers in the plant? I believe they have such a responsibility. On behalf of this coalition I am calling on GM Chairman Roger Smith to meet with the leaders of the community to uphold that responsibility.

In the movie, Arzube is shown joining the rest of the meeting in chants of "El pueblo unido jamas sera vencido" and applauding rhythmically and fervently. Pretty spunky stuff for a US Bishop!

Professor Rudolfo Acuna perhaps sums it up most



GM workers marching to keep their plant open, April 1986.

eloquently in his remarks to F. James McDonald at the community meeting with GM in January of 1984: "There has been a long-standing affinity between the Chicano and the Chevrolet, but if you ever close down the plant, I promise you I will do everything in my power to sever that historical relationship."

GM Van Nuys: Paradigm or Parochialism

The battle at GM Van Nuys is rooted in the conditions of Los Angeles. It is not however a go-it-alone effort that ignores the plight of workers in the GM system nationally or autoworkers in general. The same crowd that has attacked P-9 as a pattern buster has attacked GM Van Nuys Local 645 for going it alone at the expense of other General Motors workers. Yet as early as 1983 delegates from Local 645 went to the International Convention in Dallas and argued for a system-wide strategy against capital flight and the widespread practice of whipsawing [playing locals off against each other in local bargaining—ed].

At the International level, however, the constant theme has been calls for protectionist legislation and the battle against imports. Of late the International's tune has deteriorated into the actual orchestration of the whipsawing, placing plant against plant, worker against worker, in what has been termed by some union officials the Superbowl of plant survival. Locals are encouraged

to adopt the Team Concept and work their butts off to save their jobs.

In this kind of environment of general retreat and hostility towards any attempt to confront corporate power, a positive experience like GM Van Nuys needs to be nurtured and assisted. Mann is clear that a local by local approach is not enough, but notes that:

At this point in the UAW's history, however, neither a job and community preservation campaign nor a program to empower local unions and communities is on the agenda. The international leadership is strategically opposed to such a confrontational strategy, and the locals are too divided and isolated to carry it out themselves. Thus, before there can be a leap from coalitions rooted in a single UAW local, such as the Van Nuys campaign, to an eventual change in strategy at the international level of the UAW, there will have to be a proliferation of regional movements based on new politics and new directions.

Taking on General Motors constantly stresses that if not for the strong leadership of President Beltran of UAW 645, the campaign would not have had the resources or capability to generate the in-plant support and community pressure on General Motors.

The way out of the dilemma that Mann poses above, in which local initiative is stifled by International complacency and collaboration, must be political. Mann points to the New Directions movement and its leader Jerry Tucker as indicative of new regional movements brewing within the UAW aimed at capturing power and resources to make a stand against the auto companies.

Tucker lost an election for Regional Director of Region 5 at the UAW Convention in Anaheim, California in 1986 by two-tenths of a vote. He charged fraud and after two years of legal and political battles funded by monthly donations of 500 UAW member supporters of the New Directions movement in the region, a new election has been ordered for August 11 by the Labor Department. A Tucker victory is the first step to widespread debate within the UAW over the way forward in fighting con-

cessions and capital flight. The emphasis that Mann places on the New Directions movement demonstrates that he and the campaign supporters at GM Van Nuys are not local fetishists, but see their experience as something to learn from, build on and spread in solidarity with other locals throughout the UAW.

The movie and the book work together, and the money for both funds the ongoing activities of the Community/Labor Coalition to Keep GM Van Nuys Open. ■

BOOK REVIEW

Miguel Marmol

by Roque Dalton

Curbstone Press, 1987,
503 pages, \$19.95.

Talking Across History

El Salvador's Miguel Marmol

by Charles Sarkis

Taking On General Motors

A Case Study of the UAW Campaign to Keep GM Van Nuys Open

by Eric Mann

Published by UCLA's Institute of Industrial Relations, 408 pp.

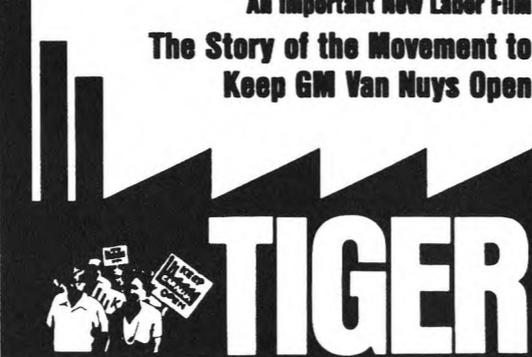
Taking On General Motors is the story of the embattled workers of UAW Local 645 in Van Nuys, California. It analyzes their unprecedented campaign in which they were able, at least temporarily, to keep their plant open by a community-based movement threatening GM with a boycott of its products in Southern California. It unfolds the sharp divisions within the local over GM's efforts to impose a "team concept" labor relations system; details the efforts of unionists to oppose the plan; and offers a critique of "non-adversarial" labor relations. *Taking On General Motors* raises bold new ideas for labor and community organizing as well as industrial and social policy.

"Taking on General Motors is an exhilarating case history of local union leaders developing new strategies against plant closings and returning union power to their membership in the face of GM's efforts to impose concessionary bargaining and to break the union itself. It is a must for every union and community activist." Victor Reuther, Former Director, UAW International Affairs Department.

"Taking on General Motors is the best work on the auto industry that I have read to date. By telling the story of a predominantly Chicano local, and the interaction of Chicano, Black, White and Asian workers, Mann goes a long way in exploding the myth that the participation of Mexicans in the labor movement has been peripheral. It is crucial to get this book out to workers and scholars." Rodolpho Acuna, Author, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*.

Ordering Information: \$20 plus \$2 postage and handling for first copy, \$1 for each additional book. (Foreign orders: \$5 postage and handling first class, \$2.50 surface mail.) 10% discount on orders of 10 or more. Send check or money order to LABOR DISTRIBUTORS, 6151 Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91401. (213) 931-9888.

An Important New Labor Film
The Story of the Movement to
Keep GM Van Nuys Open



**TIGER
BY THE
TAIL**

Directed by
Michal Goldman
Written by
Eric Mann
Narrated by
Ed Asner

"The UAW-led movement in Van Nuys is one of the most advanced laboratories for building a movement to stop a plant closing—before it happens."
"In *Tiger by the Tail* we learn about the exciting possibilities for multi-racial and community coalition-building, and about the rebirth of a progressive, hard-headed American labor movement. It's an excellent film."

Bennett Harrison
Co-author, *The Deindustrialization of America*

This 40-minute color film can be purchased on VHS, Beta or ¼" cassette for \$200 (includes postage and handling). Discounts available for low-budget community and labor groups.

Order from: LABOR/COMMUNITY COALITION
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The psychopaths are back in the saddle in El Salvador. A counter-insurgency program that combined demonstration elections with extraordinary air-borne firepower, costing U.S. taxpayers 3 billion dollars and Salvadorans tens of thousands of human beings, has come to this: ARENA, the party founded by known death squad leader Roberto d'Aubuisson, the man former U.S. Ambassador Robert White described as a psychopathological killer, easily beat President Duarte's Christian Democrats. Current prospects are for far-right control of the Salvadoran legislature, of the municipal governments of many major cities and towns (including, for the first time since 1964, San Salvador itself) and perhaps even for a far-right President after next year's elections.

Bad news for the Reagan Administration but no better news for the Democrats. Support for Duarte and counter-insurgency has been as bipartisan as anyone could wish. Neither Congress nor the major media outlets have sniffed around El Salvador's state-sponsored terrorism for years now. But bad news for those bankrolling the extermination of the Left does not necessarily translate into good news for their adversaries. The financial corruption, broken promises and incompetence show that Duarte and the Christian Democrats cannot govern El Salvador. But then, the Christian Democrats haven't been governing El Salvador. They have been lolling about on a theatrical stage set for the benefit of the U.S. media, and passing out bags of dollars in the off-hours. Now the painted sets have fallen down and the real government in El Salvador—the U.S., whose aid to the country now exceeds El Salvador's own national budget, the military and the oligarchy—have momentarily been caught in the spotlight. The daily, seemingly unbearable horror is unchanged.

At this moment comes an admirable English translation of a book long famous in Latin America, a classic work that bears witness to an

earlier horror that was not only borne, but transcended and finally conquered through the extremity of the current revolutionary struggle. It is the extraordinary testimony of Miguel Marmol, shoemaker, trade unionist, communist leader, a contemporary of Agustin Farabundo Marti, mythic witness and irrepressible narrator.

The book is the product of a 1966 collaboration between Marmol, then in his early sixties, and Roque Dalton, a brilliant historian and El Salvador's leading modern poet, then only 31. As he tells the story in the introduction to the book, Dalton was then a journalist representing the Communist Party of El Salvador, on assignment in Prague. (Dalton later quit the Communist Party and joined the leadership of the Revolutionary Army of the People—ERP; in 1975 he was falsely accused of serving the CIA and executed). In one of those ironies of exile, he found himself in a restaurant serving as guide to Marmol, whose legend he knew but with whom he had had only a few contacts in El Salvador. To that encounter and the weeks of interviewing that followed we owe this book, a work of great literature that we might understand as an oral history, but belongs rather to the Latin American tradition of the *testimonio*—or testimony.

His early life reads like one of those young adult historical novels in which the 12 year old hero or heroine just happens to work in a stable when Paul Revere comes in looking for a good horse, then holds the inkwell while John Hancock catches up on some writing, then falls asleep in a rowboat that George Washington borrows to cross the Delaware in. Marmol was born on the Fourth of July in Ilopango, today the site of the huge airbase from which many of the *contra* airdrops originate. His features were Indian, his birth the product of an apparently brief affair between his married father and his unmarried mother, and he is shunned as a dark, illegitimate Indian by members of his mother's family. His mother worked as a domestic and a cook at one point landing a job in the home of Dr. Manuel Enrique Araujo, just before he was elected President of El Salvador (Araujo is later hacked to death by machete by the oligarchy's assassins). He left school in the fourth grade to work for fishermen; not long after, he got a job working in the local National Guard barracks. He gets into a dispute with a drunken major and gets a discharge. That night, the first one in months that he has not slept in the Ilopango barracks, an earthquake strikes and all the guardsmen and officers are buried under the collapsed



Boston Globe/Bill Brett

Miguel Marmol

buildings. "Like they say, life loves a winner," Marmol says. It is 1918, and he is thirteen.

He becomes a shoemaker. News of the Bolshevik revolution comes mainly from local Red Scare propaganda but also from clandestine socialist agitators. But "propaganda against the Russian revolution had made such agitation popular and a number of 'Bolshevik' style products had turned up in the local markets: Bolshevik sweets, Bolshevik bread, Bolshevik shoes, etc." As a representative of the shoemakers, he is an activist in the early labor movement of the 1920s. He becomes a founding member of the Young Communist League and of the Communist Party of El Salvador, and serves as the first official delegate of the Salvadoran workers' movement to the Congress of the World Red Trade Union Federation—PROFINTERN—held in Moscow in 1930. There are fascinating pages about the early Salvadoran labor movement and his experiences as a Central American communist abroad. Always Marmol speaks as an organizer, not just someone who attended meetings: he recounts many trips on foot across the countryside, he offers an organizer's political assessments of hundreds of people, he describes the hardships of clandestinity and full-time revolutionary work.

He is often funny. Coming back from Moscow he gets stuck in Paris with too little money for the boat back home. "That was because the representative from Honduras, one Valdez, had stolen his delegation's trip money, leaving comrade Hercle holding the bag. As for

me, it never would've crossed my mind that there could be thieves within the movement, but because of that experience I say it's better to be cautious because you wind up sounding stupid, saying 'That comrade is irreproachable, but damn, the money sure is missing.'" He talks and he talks, and the words that pour out of him, all this history that he kept in his head, his idiosyncrasies, his remarks about Salvadoran electrical companies or Salvadoran drunks, his superstitions, his exhaustion, his hunger, his resentment that younger Salvadoran revolutionaries thought his generation had an artisanal outlook, propel you forward like a spring flood. Those words take you to the middle of the book, to the formative experience of modern El Salvador and the central experience in Marmol's life, and it is the congruence of those two that gives Marmol's life its epic quality. This is the great anti-communist bloodbath of 1932, the event known simply as *la matanza*, the massacre.

No review can do justice to the many pages devoted to this episode. In December of 1931, the army took power through another *coup d'état*; General Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez became President and called for municipal and congressional elections the following month. The Communist Party decided to participate in those elections. It had broad support in the countryside, particularly in the western part of the country. Thousands of people registered on electoral rolls as supporters of the communists, and communist candidates won a number of posts. Naturally the Martinez government refused to certify the results. Led by Agustin Farabundo Marti, "el Negro" who had fought at the side of Sandino in Nicaragua, the Central Committee decided to undertake an insurrection in two weeks. They counted on support from key regiments in the army, and apparently had some; but Marti alone maintained the contacts with sympathizing officers and soldiers. The plans were discovered, a number of the military supporters disarmed and shot, and Marti captured. Marmol and others in the leadership argued that the insurrection had to go ahead on the grounds that ferocious repression was coming anyway.

The insurrection itself was the uncoordinated and largely spontaneous expression of class hatred, and its partisans were mainly Indian laborers with machetes. It was easily defeated. In the course of fighting, the rebels killed about 30 civilians and 50 military personnel. The generally accepted figure for the massacre that followed is 30,000 people, or two percent of the total population. That would be the equivalent of killing 4 million, 5 hun-

dred thousand Americans today. Whole villages were executed. The army used the electoral rolls on which communist supporters had registered, and in some areas it simply shot every Indian with a machete.

Marmol himself was captured, alone and unarmed, in San Salvador. He is interrogated and packed into a cell with other prisoners, all doomed. Then a group of them have their hands bound behind their backs and are taken away in a truck.

Marmol knew most of them, remembers their names and describes their heroism in the hours before their execution, and then he tells how each of them died. The account of the truck ride, of the firing squad, but most of all of the behavior of the martyrs—some communists, some people there by accident—will stand your hair on end. Marmol and a Russian peddler who sold religious



The massacre of the last eight years in El Salvador has already taken twice as many lives as the *matanza* of 1932.

icons volunteer to go early. Alone of the group, he survives five volleys, including a shot in the head.

There is so much else. There is an intriguing portrait of Marti. There is an hilarious account of Marmol's recovery: he eventually hides behind an altar set up for mourners to pray for his soul. "I really got a kick out of the praying, since the neighbors, friends, and acquaintances had many memories of me, of both sad and happy times. But my sister, afraid that someone was going to find me out, raced through the prayers so that people wouldn't stay long." But Marmol also conveys, with details that few history books ever approach, the horror of the massacre, the extraordinary trauma that the survivors experienced, the sadness that even the rambunctious and optimistic Marmol can never shake. "For years and years the people in the countryside kept being unpleasantly surprised all the time on seeing the skeleton of a hand, a foot, a skull cropping out of the earth. And every now and then, the domestic animals, pigs, dogs, etc., showed up with a decayed hand or a human rib between their teeth. The dogs made out like bandits digging up corpses whose murderers had barely covered them with a thin layer of dirt, since there was no time to dig deep graves—they had to keep up the killing." The Salvadoran people are all survivors of that massacre.

The remainder of the book details how through political activity, much of it in Guatemala, Marmol coped with his survival. Amid the many rich observations about revolutionary work in awful conditions, we hear Marmol's voice, talky, indomitable, aggrieved and grieving,

and strangely, sometimes serenely wise.

For eight years now, the *matanza* in El Salvador has been a daily occurrence. It has now taken more than twice as many lives as the massacre of 1932. Unthinkably, the horror of the past years is more unspeakable than that of 50 years ago. The next U.S. Administration, Republican or Democrat, will set out once again to find the combination of cosmetic reform and withering firepower to protect U.S. strategic dominance of the hemisphere. But at 82, Miguel Marmol is still alive, and somewhere is still talking. So are the guerrillas of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation front. So too, inside their heads, are exemplary stories of El Salvador. Thanks to Roque Dalton, translators Kathleen Ross and Richard Schaaf, and to Curbstone Press, Miguel Marmol will always be talking, across history, to us. ■

Note: Curbstone Press has an ambitious publishing schedule for works from Latin America. To support it, they are "asking supporters and readers to send one dollar or more to help fund these books and to demonstrate a broad based support for an engaged art. Curbstone will produce a pamphlet with excerpts from current and forthcoming books and a printed wall of the names of those who join the dollar brigade....To add your name to the wall of names, send \$1.00 or more with your name and address to Curbstone Press, 321 Jackson Street, Willimantic, Conn. 06226." On the evidence of *Miguel Marmol*, Curbstone deserves the support. (Remember to mention *FM!*)