

Can Israel Afford Begin?

A sick prime minister presiding over a divided cabinet in Jerusalem is standing in the way of a Middle East settlement along lines acceptable to the rest of the world.

If Israel were strong, independent and united, it would still be difficult for it to maintain its present stance against the disapproval of its friends as well as its enemies abroad. Of course Israel is strong, in the limited sense of military capability. The arms so liberally furnished by the United States enable Israel to defy with impunity the forces of its Arab neighbours — and, with equal impunity, to defy the will of its only ally, the United States.

In every other sense, however, Israel today is weaker than it has ever been. It is wholly dependent on the support of the United States, which is providing it with military and budgetary assistance running at the rate of approximately \$10 million a day (excluding the tax-free loans and donations of Jewish sympathisers in the United States). Despite this aid, Israel's economy is in chaos, with a massive balance of payments deficit and an inflation rate of some 8 per cent a month. Partly as a result of this and partly because of uncertainty over the direction of foreign policy, the country is as deeply divided as the government — in which rival ministers abuse each other and pursue their rivalries by leaking the minutes of cabinet meetings to reporters from rival newspapers.

In the circumstances it is not surprising that the spirit of national solidarity which once characterised Israeli life has given way to a free-for-all of social and economic conflict, in which strikes are endemic, corruption is commonplace and even the much-vaunted Israeli Defence Forces are now permeated with smugglers and drug peddlers.

That an Israel in such a condition of moral decline should still be able to impose its will on the Arab world is absurd and degrading. It highlights the divisions in the Arab camp and the failure of the Arabs to make intelligent use of the powerful weapons at their disposal. But even more clearly it illustrates the futility of American policy in the Middle East and the weakness of those Western powers which know what is wrong with American policy but cannot quite bring themselves to say so out loud.

What is wrong with American policy in the Middle East has been no secret for a long time; but the secret has become common knowledge since the fiasco that led to the resignation of Andrew Young. It is, bluntly, that the Americans have been playing a double game, asserting in public a set of principles which in practice they have always disregarded. They have upheld Resolution 242 as the proper basis for a

settlement — and have backed down when the Israelis refused to implement it. They have made pious declarations about “the legitimate rights of the Palestinians” — and connived with the Israelis in the violation of those rights. They have denounced the establishment of Israeli settlements on the West Bank — and provided the diplomatic protection and the financial assistance (as well as many of the settlers) without which this open policy of colonisation could not have been pursued. They have called for an end to Israeli attacks on the Lebanon — and continued to furnish the ultra-modern weapons with which those attacks are carried out.

In short, the United States has tried to be at the same time the ally of Israel and the arbiter in the Middle East; and the two roles are incompatible. Even the famous promise to Israel not to deal with the PLO until the PLO recognised Israel — which hamstrung American diplomacy and led to Andrew Young's resignation — was evidence of the clear bias in American policy. Why, if the United States is sincere in its concern for the rights of the Palestinians, has there been no corresponding promise to the Arabs not to deal with Israel until Israel agrees to implement those rights?

It is this evident partiality on the part of the United States that defeats the American attempts to bring the PLO into the framework of peace negotiations. Whether it is President Carter or the Austrian Chancellor, Dr Bruno Kreisky, the Foreign Ministers of the European Community or, most recently, the American black leader, Mr Jesse Jackson, who tries to tempt the PLO into a more cooperative attitude, the attempt is certain to fail until the Americans offer some sign of genuine evenhandedness — and that means until they show some determination to bring pressure to bear on Israel. Without that, and so long as American aid to Israel continues to flow whatever the Israelis do to frustrate the search for peace, the PLO will bide its time in the consciousness that the tide of world opinion is flowing more and more strongly in its favour.

The resulting stalemate is bad for Israel, because it encourages the delusion that Israel can have peace without giving up the occupied territories. It is bad for the Americans, because it exposes their Middle East policy as both insincere and ineffectual. It is bad for the rest of us, because it increases the dangers of renewed oil shortages, or war — or both — in the approaching winter. The obstacle to progress is Mr Begin and if the Americans are too weak to handle him it is encouraging to see from the opinion polls that a growing number of Israelis have come to see him as a liability that they can no longer afford.

From our Correspondents

Refurbishing The Arab Image

A recent seminar in London focussed on the distortions of the Arab image in the Western mass media. Edward Mortimer describes how the British press rose to the occasion.

"Arabs grab British girl" was the banner front-page headline in the *Daily Express* on Saturday September 29. The "exclusive" story underneath dealt with the disappearance, a few weeks earlier, of a Lebanese businessman in his private plane on a flight from Athens to Riyadh. It suggested that the plane, last heard from in Egyptian airspace, had not crashed but had been forced down in Libya, "a hardline Marxist state", and that Colonel Qaddafi was now holding all the plane's passengers hostage, including the businessman's British secretary, in order to prevent a multimillion dollar arms deal with Syria. The sources quoted for this remarkable speculation (there was little pretence that it was any more than that) were the Israeli secret service and... Lord Chalfont! It was not explained why the plane should have entered Libyan airspace or how Libyan military aircraft could have entered Egyptian airspace to intercept it without causing a major incident, or why Qaddafi should want to stop Syria, a state with which he has good relations, from acquiring arms.

But there it was, in black and white,

reinforcing the casual British reader's opinion of "the Arabs" — all hundred and fifty million of them — as dangerous unstable ruffians from whom no British virgin is safe. An example so perfect that it was hard to believe it had not been published specially to coincide with the two-day international press seminar which opened in London that very day on "the Arab image in the Western mass media".

It was perhaps an extreme example, but plenty more, hardly less absurd, were quoted in the course of the seminar, from both British and American media. Professor Jack Shaheen told us how Arabs were invariably villains, never heroes, in American TV serials, and Dr Walid Khadduri, Director of Information for OAPEC, analysed the distortions in Western reporting of the energy crisis, illustrating his point with a series of newspaper cartoons, several of which would surely have been rejected as racist had they dealt with any other ethnic group than Arabs.

Edward Said, developing his now well-known thesis on Orientalism, suggested that the West's sudden re-discovery of "Islam" in the last year or so was merely the latest in a long series of mystifications, making the Muslim world appear more alien to the West and so perhaps preparing the ground for a new military aggression against it. Mohammed Heikal, too, warned that

the Arabs now faced "an actual physical danger of being subjected to an abusive exercise of force by powers which might not stop short of using armed aggression". But, he said, the Arabs should beware of becoming too pre-occupied with their image, and concentrate on improving the reality behind it: "You can't talk about an Arab image unless you have an Arab nation, an Arab strategy, an Arab effectiveness." In the last resort, he said, "if I have to choose between the respect of the world without its sympathy, and sympathy without respect, I will always choose respect."

The seminar concluded on a practical note, with a number of suggestions from working journalists of steps that might be taken to correct the Arab image in the Western mind. Heikal himself suggested a specialised agency or foundation, established jointly by the Arab League, OAPEC and the Islamic Congress but with a guarantee of freedom to follow its own judgement in "presenting the political, cultural, human and economic Arab realities to western perceptions". Another suggestion was a programme of fellowships on the Harkness or Fulbright model, enabling Western opinion leaders to live for some months in the Arab world; and a third, an Anglo-Arab Press Association to promote contacts and reciprocal help between British and Arab journalists. □

Support in Rome for Rights of Palestinians

On the eve of his departure for the United Nations, Pope John Paul was asked to remember the tragedy of the Palestinian people. Michael Adams reports that participants in an International Colloquium on the Rights of the Palestinians held in Rome at the end of September appealed to His Holiness to act as "the spokesman for justice and peace in the Middle East".

The Colloquium, in which members of the Israeli Knesset and official representatives of the PLO met in the presence of more than a hundred European and North American delegates, was held under the auspices of a committee representing almost all shades of opinion on the Italian political scene. From Christian Democrats on the

right to Communists on the left, Italian party spokesmen stressed the interest of Italy and its European partners in the achievement of a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East and their conviction that such a settlement must involve recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, including their right to self-determination.

For the Italian press, which gave extensive coverage to the Colloquium, the main point of interest, inevitably, was the confrontation between authentic representatives of the central protagonists in the struggle over Palestine: between Zionist Israelis and delegates from the PLO. Commentators in *La Stampa* and *Corriere della Sera* noted with approval and some surprise the extent to which these found themselves in broad agreement about the proper basis for any settle-

ment in the Middle East.

For the PLO, and speaking with the authority of one of the fifteen members of the organisation's Executive Committee, Mr Ahmed Dajani declared the Palestinian objective to be the establishment of "an independent state in the territories occupied since the war of June 1967". For the Israeli delegation Mr Uri Avneri, magazine editor and Knesset member for the Sheli party, and Mr Yaacov Arnon, a former director-general of the Ministry of Finance under the Labour government of Levi Eshkol, declared themselves and their colleagues to be in favour of "an independent Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel", adding that both the Israeli and the Palestinian states should have their capitals in the two sectors of Jerusalem.

Both sides, of course, had their reservations. The Israelis in particular

anxious that the Colloquium, in emphasising as repeatedly as it did the need to recognise the national rights of the Palestinians, should not allow any ambiguity about the corresponding right of the Israelis to maintain their national existence in full peace and security. The Palestinians, while expressing their appreciation for the attitude of the Israelis present, were aware that they spoke only for a minority in Israel and deplored the absence among them of any representatives of the ruling Israeli establishment.

Nevertheless, where each side was prepared to go so far towards accepting the basic demands of the other, a remarkable spirit of cooperation, and even of friendship, marked the contacts, both formal and informal, between the Israeli and Palestinian participants. Even a very critical discussion of the ways in which the human rights of the Palestinians in the occupied territories were consistently violated by the Israeli authorities did not disturb the atmosphere; indeed, it was the Israeli lawyer and human rights advocate, Mrs Felicia Langer, who spoke most forcefully of all in denunciation of Israel's disregard for international law in its treatment of the Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In a statement adopted at the final session of the Colloquium the delegates, including those from Israel, called for an end to human rights violations in the occupied territories and urged the Italian government to recognise the PLO and invite its chairman, Yasser Arafat, to visit Rome. □

Is the Euro-Arab Dialogue On or Off?

From Rimini, where Arabs and Europeans met last week to look at the prospects for the Euro-Arab dialogue, Livia Rokach reports that OPEC's president had some blunt words for the Europeans.

In a speech broadcast live over Eurovision, Mana Said Al-Oteiba, Oil Minister of the United Arab Emirates and currently President of OPEC, accepted with courtesy the homage of the Italian Minister of Foreign Trade for his "efforts towards building a bridge between the Arab World and Europe". Then he went on to explain candidly that no effective dialogue was possible between the European Community and the oil-producing countries unless the Europeans decided to recognise the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

THE POPE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The following is an extract from the speech made by Pope John Paul II before the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York on 2 October.

It is my fervent hope that a solution also to the Middle East crises may draw nearer. While being prepared to recognise the value of any concrete step or attempt made to settle the conflicts, I want to recall that it would have no value if it did not truly represent the "first stone" of a general overall peace in the area, a peace that, being necessarily based on equitable recognition of the rights of all, cannot fail to include the consideration and just settlement of the Palestinian question. Connected with this question is that of the tranquillity, independence and territorial integrity of

Lebanon within the formula that has made it an example of peaceful and mutually fruitful co-existence between distinct communities, a formula that I hope will, in the common interest, be maintained, with the adjustments required by the developments of the situation. I also hope for a special statute that, under international guarantees — as my predecessor Paul VI indicated — would respect the particular nature of Jerusalem, a heritage sacred to the veneration of millions of believers of the three great monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Dismissing the accusation that this could be interpreted as 'oil blackmail', he insisted that the question was one of justice — and of the simple facts of life — because the sufferings of the Palestinians were now well known. "Therefore, we Arabs wish to hear from our European friends a word of justice." Without that, it was difficult to expect the relationship to develop.

Nor should anyone forget the extent to which oil production was dependent on the cooperation of Palestinians, whether as engineers, technicians, labourers or pipeline guards. "Hungry for justice, frustrated in their decades-old national aspirations, the Palestinians may one day set fire to the wells. If the oil catches fire, there will be none either for ourselves or for you." Mr Al-Oteiba put his cards on the table with equal frankness in stating the economic conditions for a "constructive" Euro-Arab dialogue: free circulation of OPEC products in Europe, coordination with the European countries over the plans for industrialisation in the Arab world, particularly in the fields of petrochemicals, gas, aluminium and steel production, so as to prevent future rivalries; the opening of EEC markets in future to non-oil Arab industrial products. "We are ready to help Europe get the oil it needs," said Mr Al-Oteiba, "but we are not disposed to discuss either the prices or the levels of production: this is part of our acquired sovereignty."

Such plain speaking used not to characterise the exchanges between Arabs and Europeans. But since the Iranian revolution things are different — the change being symbolised, according to Mr Al-Oteiba, by the fact that "until yesterday we spoke English at these meetings, now we speak Arabic."

Perhaps that is why the Europeans here seemed inhibited. Although OPEC's president claimed that "the real Euro-Arab dialogue only starts today, here in Rimini", when the meeting came to an end three days later the dialogue still seemed more like a monologue. As one Kuwaiti delegate put it, "Europeans still seem more interested in bickering among themselves about their own internal problems than in engaging in a realistic dialogue with us." □

South Yemen Presses for Unity

A united Yemen remains an important objective for the South Yemeni government. Fred Halliday reports on this and other aspects of the regime's policy.

Six months after the initial agreement reached in Kuwait between the Presidents of North and South Yemen, discussions are still continuing on the implementation of unity between the two states. In an interview with the US television network NBC on 30 September, South Yemeni President Abdul Fattah Ismail, who is actually a native of North Yemen, stressed that the momentum towards unity was continuing and that the South does not consider the North to be a separate country.

Two days later, the South Yemeni Premier, Ali Nasser Mohammad, visited Sanaa for discussions and, in a talk published on the anniversary of his country's revolution, North Yemeni President Abdullah Salih stressed: "Efforts to achieve unity have not stopped and will not stop". The joint communiqué issued at the end of Ali Nasser Mohammad's visit confirmed that, because of delays in the working of the different of specialist committees,

the original deadlines had been extended. This renewed commitment to unity comes at a time when the southern regime is making a number of changes in its foreign and domestic policies. A visit by Soviet Premier Kosygin in mid-September led to the signing of new economic agreements with the USSR; it also resulted in South Yemen becoming an observer in Comecon. At the same time South Yemen appears to be ending its long-drawn out dispute with Iraq over the shooting of an Iraqi communist by officials of the Iraqi embassy in Aden earlier this year. The Iraqi officials sentenced by the Aden court are to be exchanged for the Yemeni diplomatic and student personnel who have been detained in Iraq since the shooting incident.

South Yemen has been quick to condemn the project advanced by Oman for a new Gulf security system, stressing in a statement on 26 September that the Omani plan was designed "to protect the interests of international imperialism and to menace the peace and security of the peoples of the region". Abdul Fattah Ismail, in the NBC interview, has reiterated Aden's refusal to establish links with Oman "because of the presence there of foreign colonial forces, an indication that the Omani regime is not independent or national".

A series of ministerial changes announced in August indicate the desire of the Aden leadership to tighten up the

governmental structure. The removal of two former guerrilla organisers, Muhammad Said Abdullah and Salih Muslim Qasim, from their posts as Ministers of State Security and the Interior respectively, comes after criticism of their treatment of political opponents. At the same time the important economic ministries have been allocated to Yemenis with technical qualifications, who are now displacing the generation of guerrilla leaders who have been running the country since Independence. The Minister of Finance, Mahmud Said Mahdi, is a graduate of the London School of Economics whilst Faraj Bin Ghanim, the Planning Minister, has a doctorate from Poland. These changes, at the time when South Yemen is entering the period of its Second Five-Year Plan, reflect the desire of the Aden leadership to produce a government team whose technical competence is on a level with its political militancy. □

Turkey's Assyrians: A Minority Moving Out

Turkey is rapidly losing its Assyrian population. From Stockholm, Per Gahrton, a Swedish member of Parliament who has been visiting south-east Turkey, reports on the situation.

It is difficult to estimate the number of Assyrians in Turkey today because they are not recognised as a minority and they lack any organisation apart from their church (the Nestorian).

However, there are probably 30,000 in all, divided between Istanbul and the Medyat-Mardin area of south-east Turkey.

In this region by the River Tigris the Assyrians are a small and frightened minority dominated by Kurdish Muslims. In the villages which I visited, I was told of the murders and robberies which the Kurds regularly commit in order to terrorise the Assyrians into leaving.

If this is Kurdish policy, it is highly successful. Large numbers of Assyrians are emigrating to Europe, most of them to Holland, Germany or Scandinavia. I met one old woman who has three children living in Holland and a priest whose six brothers are all living in Europe. Twenty years ago in Mardin there were 300 Assyrian families; today there are only 70. In one village I saw 100 empty houses. Most of the Assyrians go to Istanbul before continuing to Europe. Some of them remain and today 10,000 Assyrians inhabit the city. But persecution does not end there: a few days before my visit, the office of the Bible Society in Istanbul, which is staffed by Assyrians, was attacked by terrorists.

The Assyrians have no future in Turkey and they know it. They are prepared to lose their property, their churches and their traditions because they have no alternative. One can only hope that the countries of Europe will open their doors to all Assyrians who are looking for a new future. □

On the Record

"Not even the French, when they ruled Syria, divided the country like this regime, and they tried hard enough."

anonymous political tract circulating in Damascus reported by David Hirst in *The Guardian*, 8 October

"The last thing in the world we need now is an additional party coming in and trying to negotiate with the PLO, with whom we don't want to talk anyway."

Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan on the refusal of Israeli leaders to meet the visiting black US delegation in *The New York Times*, 28 September

"We have enemies who must be given a chance. If they fail to respond, they must be punished through the use of oil."

Iraqi Foreign Minister Saadoun Hammadi in *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 October

"If there is another world war, it will be over petroleum."

Mana Said Al-Oteiba, OPEC president, Vienna reported by Associated Press, 3 October

"If the United States lets the rest of the world think it is desperate for more oil, it ought not to be surprised when other governments try to exploit that craving."

editorial comment in *The Washington Post*, 27 September

"I was dismayed to hear Secretary Miller applaud the fact that [US] cars will average 19 miles per gallon this year and 27.5 miles per gallon in 1986, if all is on schedule. The Europeans have averaged over 30 miles per gallon for the past decade. This sort of thing makes us very skeptical about how serious you all are."

a Kuwaiti delegate to the IMF conference, Belgrade in *The New York Times*, 4 October

Point of View

Is Soviet policy towards the Middle East entering a new phase? Henry Baghot, a political analyst based in Paris, argues that for the moment the Russians are content to let the United States alienate Arab opinion by its failure to stand up for Palestinian rights.

During the period from the Geneva Conference until the joint American-Soviet communiqué of 1 October 1977, the Soviet Union certainly sought to extend its influence in the Arab world at American expense by appearing as the champion of Palestinian rights, but always within closely defined limits. Moscow's support was for the "mainstream" PLO, not the Rejection Front, and it was Israel's role as America's ally in the Middle East that was contested, not its right to existence. There was tacit recognition that it was pressure by the United States on Israel that was most likely to bring peace. Moscow merely wanted the credit for bringing about that pressure.

The collapse of the Carter administration's resolve in the face of ferocious Zionist lobbying against the joint statement, together with United States support for Camp David and the separate Israeli-Egyptian treaty, has altered the Russian strategy. Their interest now is to let the United States get more and more entangled in its pro-Camp David efforts. The longer the United States struggles to keep the faltering "autonomy" negotiations alive, the more it is isolating itself from almost every Arab country except Egypt and the more the Soviet Union's condemnation of the separate peace offers a welcome contrast.

There are other reasons why the Russians are happy to prolong the present impasse. They have not been doing at all well in the Middle East — in both Afghanistan and Iran a resurgence of Moslem extremism, in Iraq brutal repression of local communists, in other Arab countries help from oil-producers, are all leading to decreasing dependence on Soviet aid or advisers. It does the Russians no harm to give the Arab world time to realise that a satisfactory Middle East settlement will require active Soviet pressure.

Another incentive for a "passive" policy is the reluctance to embark on new initiatives as the Brezhnev era draws to a close. One of the few objectives the Russians appear to have at the moment is the essentially negative one of discouraging a closer Euro-Arab political dialogue and placing obstacles in the way of closer relations between western Europe and the PLO.

There have been three small, but significant, symptoms of this in recent weeks. At the Interparliamentary Union Conference in Caracas, the Soviet bloc, after deliberately playing a very minor part in initial drafting sessions, introduced amendments in such a way as to make it difficult for western European countries to vote in favour of a resolution which would have left Israel in a minority of one.

Representatives of Soviet bloc countries were also asked by an organising committee which included prominent Italian communists to the Rome colloquium where senior PLO members met Israeli MP's and academics. Only Rumania accepted.

Finally, is it by chance that the French Communist Party leader, Georges Marchais, invited Yasser Arafat to France just when delicate negotiations were going on for a government invitation to either Arafat or Farouk Qaddoumi? The publicity has certainly made it less likely that such an invitation will be extended.

Whatever the provocation, western Europe must not fall into the trap. Right-wing opponents of Palestinian national rights claim that an independent Palestinian state will be a Soviet tool. The way to make sure that this is not the outcome is to give support now to the moderate, mainstream PLO leadership.

The Future of 242

by Lord Caradon

Although it was adopted unanimously 12 years ago, UN Security Council Resolution 242 has never been implemented. Lord Caradon explores the reasons for this, and suggests what ought to be done next.

The most remarkable fact about United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 of 22 November 1967 is that it was unanimous. I do not forget the joy of looking to my right in the Security Council meeting that evening and seeing Kuznetsov raise his finger to vote for the British resolution, thus making it unanimous. (In subsequent years Deputy Foreign Minister, and now Vice-President, Kuznetsov has sent me word from time to time saying "our resolution is still doing well".)

The Resolution set out the agreed principles for a peaceful settlement. It also provided for the action to give those principles effect.

A Special Representative was to be appointed "to establish and maintain contacts with the states concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions

Lord Caradon was Britain's Permanent Representative at the United Nations from 1964 to 1970.

and principles of this resolution". Consequently Ambassador Jarring of Sweden, an experienced ambassador of the highest reputation, was appointed to be the United Nations' Special Representative.

He proceeded to the area in accordance with his mandate, he held discussions with those concerned, and he put forward his initial proposals. These proposals were at once completely rejected. Ambassador Jarring continued for a while in his efforts, but when he realised he could make no progress at all he abandoned his task.

So after twelve years it is still necessary to decide whether the agreed principles will be given effect, and how that can be done. The Camp David final document spoke of the need to establish peace on the basis of Resolution 242 "in all its parts". It will indeed be a contemptible conclusion if, having made that declaration, the three signatories, instead of going forward to carry out the principles agreed in 1967, acquiesce in their abandonment.

Criticism

Two criticisms of Resolution 242 have been made.

First, it is said that in calling for "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict" we should have stipulated that this meant withdrawal from *all* the occupied territories. We did not think so for two reasons. First, the Resolution had started off by stating clearly the fundamental principle of "the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war", and that rules out retaining territory merely because it had been militarily occupied. Second, as to the boundaries, we did not seek to establish the 1967 boundaries as a permanent frontier for the very good reason that the 1967 boundaries (which were in fact no more than the cease-fire boundaries on a certain night twenty years earlier) were unsuitable for a permanent international frontier.

So the omission of the words "all the" or "the" before the words "territories occupied in the recent conflict" was deliberate. I knew the 1967 boundaries very well myself. I knew that they cried out for rectifications, since they did injustices to Arabs in some areas and to Israelis in others. I was not prepared to use words in the Resolution which would have perpetuated the cease-fire lines of two decades before.

The sensible way to decide permanent "secure and recognised" boundaries would be to set up a Boundary Commission to hear both sides and then to make impartial recommendations for a sensible frontier line, of course bearing in mind the "inadmissibility" principle.

The second criticism of the 242 Resolution is that, while calling for a solution to the refugee problem, it does not speak of Palestinian self-determination. But it is necessary to remember that when we drew up 242 we all took it for granted that the occupied territory would be restored to Jordan. Everyone, including the Arabs, so assumed. It was not until after 1967 that the Palestinians advanced their claims. This was a development of the utmost importance, but it was subsequent to 1967.

So it is in this most important respect that the 1967 Resolution is now seriously lacking. Developments since the Resolution was adopted have made it necessary that the right of the Palestinians for self-determination in their own homeland should be recognised and ensured, and this should certainly be a main provision of any new resolution.

Action

So what is now required?

Not a reversal or a reduction of the 242 principles, but an addition, a new resolution bringing the original Resolution up to date and also providing for its implementation. After confirmation of the principles set out in the original Resolution, the new one must deal with the following five main issues:

1. Cessation of all violence and of all establishment of Israeli settlements in occupied territory.
2. Creation of a Boundary Commission to hear both sides and make recommendations for a permanent "secure and recognised" frontier.
3. A period of international trusteeship over East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza (and also the Golan), during which period the Palestinians can exercise self-determination, elect their own leaders, and decide on their own constitution and on their relations with their neighbours.
4. Provision of international guarantees (together with demilitarised zones) to preserve the right of every state in the area to live in peace, "free from threats and acts of force".

5. A final peace conference to take place in Geneva under the joint chairmanship of the United States and the Soviet Union as before (with the Palestinians represented by their newly-elected leaders), to prepare and sign the peace treaties.

It may be thought that these are ambitious aims. Certainly they are. But no more ambitious than Resolution 242 itself. It should surely not be more difficult to decide on action to carry out agreed principles and purposes than it was to agree on the principles and purposes themselves twelve years ago.

Reaction

How strong is the opposition to a second resolution to give effect to the original Resolution 242?

Very limited, I would say, on the Arab side. All the Arab governments directly concerned, including particularly Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Jordan, and Egypt too, have declared their support for the original principles and for Palestinian self-determination. The PLO has not openly abandoned its old contention that Israel should be replaced by a single new state in which Arabs and Jews can live together in equality, but for a long time past this has been generally recognised by Arabs and others as unattainable. My own evidence, from talking to Palestinian leaders in Beirut and Damascus as well as Palestinians in Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, and also Palestinian refugees in the camps, is that there would be overwhelming Arab rejoicing if Arab Jerusalem and the West Bank and Gaza could be recovered to give the Palestinians a homeland of their own.

On the Israeli side the rejectionists are much stronger. At Camp David, Prime Minister Begin put his signature to the document endorsing Resolution 242 "in all its parts". But he nevertheless boasted that he had opposed the fundamental principle of the "inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war", and he has claimed the right of the Israeli army to remain indefinitely on the West Bank together with the right of Israel to annex Arab Jerusalem.

These claims are of course in direct contradiction to the provisions of Resolution 242. If they are to be maintained then there can be no peace, and both the Israelis and their neighbours will be condemned to a future of enmity, bloodshed and destruction.

There are however other voices and other influences in Israel. The Peace Now and New Outlook movements are steadily gaining strength. There is a growing realisation in Israel that security cannot be based on the subjugation and dispersal of more than three million Palestinians. There is, I feel sure, a mounting awareness that peace cannot come from domination and animosity but must come from equal rights and mutual respect.

It was the Israeli leader Ben Gurion who spoke of "a settlement they [the Arabs] will not reluctantly agree to live with, but will enthusiastically welcome from their hearts as essential for our common future — that is our only true security".

When I introduced the draft British resolution in the Security Council on 15 November 1967, I said:

"The Arab countries insist that we must direct our special attention to the recovery of their territories. The Israelis tell us that withdrawal must never be to the old precarious peace but to secure boundaries. Both are right. The aims of the two sides do not conflict. To imagine that one can be secured without the other is a delusion. They are of equal validity and equal necessity. We want not a victory in New York, but a success in the Middle East."

God willing, the chance of success so long postponed will not now be thrown away.

US Middle East Policy Under Fire

by John Cooley & Mark Bruzonsky

At the annual conference of the Middle East Institute at Washington's Mayflower Hotel last week, searching criticism was directed at the Carter Administration's Middle East policy. John Cooley writes that in particular there was impatience over the Administration's refusal to talk to the Palestinians.

The Institute — whose membership includes the principal mandarins of US Middle East policy since 1948, and whose president is L. Dean Brown, US ambassador to Jordan during the crucial 'Black September' of 1970 — last weekend considered the question "The Middle East after partial peace: what lies ahead?" Not much that is hopeful, concluded the two opening speakers (both men who have played critical roles in fashioning the Camp David peace agreements), unless the US government changes its tune and opens a dialogue with the PLO which is designed, as former National Security Council member William Quandt put it, "not to further dialogue for the sake of dialogue, but to draw the Palestinians into the peace process in a meaningful way".

Herman F. Eilts, the last US ambassador to Egypt, who is now a visiting professor at Boston University, stoutly defended President Carter as the "American president who has sought to learn most about Arab-Israeli peace, and has contributed most to achieving it" through his insistence that the Palestinian issue is the central one. Eilts dismissed as "balderdash" Israeli claims that the Israeli intelligence warning to President Sadat of a Libyan assassination plot, and the secret contacts between Hassan Touhami and Moshe Dayan in Morocco, had led to Sadat's peace journey to Jerusalem and the final success of Egyptian-Israeli peace efforts. Those meetings, said Eilts, had "no results"; and "without President Carter nothing could have been accomplished".

Eilts, a taciturn, careful man who rarely speaks in public or talks to journalists, went on to admit — an admission endorsed by Quandt — that both Carter and Sadat had been deluded, during the final exhausting talks before the signing of the 26 March 1979 agreement, into believing that Israel had agreed to freeze further development of settlements on the West Bank. It was not until 24 hours after the signing, they both disclosed, that the US administration realised that Israel had given no such undertaking.

Settlements, land ownership and control of water rights, Quandt acknowledged, were now crucial issues which would make or break autonomy talks. "Only a green light from the PLO", admitted Eilts, would make it possible to draw the Palestinians, the Jordanians and other directly concerned parties into the peace process. It would also be necessary for the US to assume completely its self-assigned role as "full partner", and to submit some ideas of its own before the 26 March 1980 deadline for success in the autonomy talks.

Quandt, who drafted policy papers for Carter on the Palestinians and also laboured in the vineyard of Camp David before becoming a research fellow at the Brookings Institution last summer, said that Carter's refusal to respond to King Hussein's wish to be invited to Washington for consultations, when he was attending the UN General

Assembly session in New York, was "insulting" to Hussein and a grave error. The United States, Quandt added, "urgently needs" to consult Syria and Saudi Arabia as well about the next steps to be taken in the Middle East.

Shortly before Quandt spoke, congressional committees were again undercutting Carter by voting to remove \$45m allocated to Syria from foreign aid appropriations on the grounds that Syria has "obstructed the peace process".

Meanwhile, as the Rev. Jesse Jackson completed his peace mission by securing a pledge from Yasser Arafat that the PLO would halt border attacks from Lebanon into Israel, a distinguished black American scholar, Professor Robert J. Cummings of Howard University in Washington, told the Middle East Institute that since the Andrew Young affair Afro-Americans were determined to remain involved in the foreign policy-making process. "The money used to fund increased military aid to Israel," he declared, "is money taken away from social programmes for black Americans." And he added that black Americans now no longer have the option of remaining silent on the Palestinian issue.

Mark Bruzonsky adds that the most forceful attack came from the former Under-Secretary of State, George Ball, guest speaker at the conference banquet.

George Ball's carefully prepared remarks provided the centrepiece of the conference. "The strategic center of the world is the Persian Gulf," he opened, continuing with a denunciation of American ineptitude in managing its interests in this vital region.

Before attacking the policies of the Carter administration, however, Ball directed his fire at the Iranian Revolution, terming Khomeini's regime "an indigenous form of fascism with a medieval Islamic overlay". "Its basic outlook is xenophobic," he added.

Besides its concern over Soviet "beachheads" in the Horn of Africa, the Indian Ocean and South Yemen, Ball continued, "Saudi Arabia, as well as the Gulf States, was badly shaken by the Shah's disappearance". And "this pervasive sense of disquiet" he added, "has been greatly intensified by the continuance of the Arab-Israeli struggle and the schism in the Arab world created by the Camp David accords".

As the former UN representative analysed the situation, "the second part of the Camp David accords was from the beginning doomed to failure". Ball likened Camp David to the Carter Sinai agreements and suggested the Israelis intended "to let this whole second half of the Camp David accords fail and disappear", leading to a "long-held tactical objective of Israel — to divide the Arab world and, by neutralising Egypt, achieve a recasting of the military balance in the area that precludes a recurrence of future two-front wars." Ball added his fear that Israeli policies are designed to "persuade more and more Arabs to leave the West Bank" and to retain the West Bank as "Israel's Soweto".

Both the US and Israel, Ball insisted, must seriously re-think the basic premises of their relationship. "The Israeli

John Cooley is Pentagon correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor.

Mark Bruzonsky is Washington correspondent of Middle East International

Government is living in a never-never-land if it thinks that the present state of affairs can indefinitely continue." And as for the US, "never before in my recollection has a major nation so docilely accepted from a small state which it was supporting the repeated rejection of its advice and suggestions, even though the large state's own national interests were prejudiced by such rejection".

"The issue for the United States," Ball continued, "is not one of putting pressure on anybody; it is how we can best spend our resources, financial and political, to advance our national interests."

Finally, by way of prescription, Ball offered these specific suggestions: the US should be "prepared not only to talk directly with the PLO but to say to them that the United States will support an arrangement providing self-determination for the people of the occupied areas, provided they, in return, are prepared, as part of the final agreement, to recognise the legitimate right of the people of Israel to territorial integrity within the pre-1967 borders, subject to such minor rectifications as may be negotiated — and are prepared to agree to necessary measures of restraint to reinforce Israeli security". "Among other measures," Ball asserted, "are the demilitarisation of the new state for at least an agreed term of years while relationships develop; the possible presence of American military in the area; elaborate technical arrangements for surveillance that will assure Israel against the possibility of surprise attack, and so on. Moreover, once peace is in sight, we should be prepared to provide Israel with economic and military assistance at even a higher level than that now maintained."

In conclusion, Ball noted, "we can assure the protection of the Persian Gulf if only we ourselves develop adequate capabilities to defend our interests as well as build the political relationships in the area which an attentive diplomacy should make possible". "I feel a deep sense of urgency that we get on with an Arab-Israeli settlement," Ball warned, "and thus eliminate that single most important cause of political instability" in the region.

To all this the nearly 500 people attending the banquet reacted with a standing ovation. As it died down, the first question to the speaker was: "Mr Ball, would you consider running for President?"



Why Can't They Design One That Fits?

Qadafi: Ten Years of Paradox

by Desmond Stewart

Libya has just celebrated the 10th anniversary of the revolution which overthrew the monarchy and brought Muammar Qadafi to power. From Cairo, Desmond Stewart looks back at the problems and achievements of the last decade.

Egypt's relations with Libya are worse than with any other Arab state. Nevertheless on 1st September, less than a week after the three-day Bairam holiday, bureaucrats in Cairo again closed their offices and newspapers to honour the revolution that, ten years ago, sent the innocuous King Idris into exile. The public holiday confirms the Egyptologist's truism that this conservative culture discards nothing. It resolves contradictions by allowing them shelf-room. Shoulder to shoulder stand Horus and the rest.

How suspect Arab resolutions are to Arab revolutionaries I was luckily placed to observe ten years ago. The news of the coup, which was to transfer an oil-rich desert state to the

radical camp, was appearing on the tickers as dinner was served in the rooftop restaurant of *Al Ahram's* new tower, only recently completed by the paper's influential editor, Muhammad Hassanein Heikal. From the table one could survey flat-roofed slums edging up to Cairo's Grub Street. My host, one of Heikal's younger recruits, went over to quiz his boss, still confident to the most powerful man in the Arab world. A to-ing and fro-ing continued during the meal. Heikal was as sceptical as everyone else. The CIA was still felt to be all-present and all-cunning. The belief that nothing could happen without its consent extended to coups which outwardly seemed against American interests. It had taken Nasser himself some years to silence the charge that he was its secret puppet.

In 1969 Nasser had a year of life ahead of him before

Desmond Stewart is the author of The Middle East: Temple of Janus and T. E. Lawrence

to squabbles and, according to the latest rumour, a malignasseur, provoked his heart into a final spasm. Without at first knowing it, Nasser had acquired his last and most faithful disciple. For Qadafi, desert-raised in the least sophisticated south Mediterranean state, saw and still sees himself as the Keeper of the Nasserist flame. Once established, Qadafi received his hero's accolade: the young Libyan reminded Nasser of himself when young.

Qadafi's decade of power has underlined the problems facing those who believe that individuals can lead history. Lacking a power base to compare with Nasser's, Qadafi has known as much frustration as Nasser experienced from lacking Qadafi's economic resources. Guided by fixed principles, both men showed something rarer and more precious, an ability to change previously held ideas under the instruction of experience.

The consciously disunited Arab world, a wrangling hydra, preserves nevertheless a sentient unity that manifests itself in a double law: a defeat or disgrace in one limb prompts a reaction of reassurance in another. This reassurance often causes as much hurt as the original trauma. Let me be specific. The Syrian secession of 1961 was Nasser's greatest political rebuff: the equivalent of the withdrawal of a school popularity prize. A year later the unshaved illiterates who overthrew the Yemeni Imam proclaimed themselves Nasserists. This reassurance initiated five years of Egyptian commitment and disaster. Qadafi's coup, significantly code-named Jerusalem, was a reply to the victorious Israeli attack of 1967 and the consequent situation in which American diplomats pronounced to Cairo cocktail parties: "The Soviets are welcome to overpopulated countries like Egypt. We'll make do with the deserts that hide oil." Such overconfidence met its nemesis in Libya.

A country so sparsely settled as Libya can only hope to astound with scenery and ruined cities. But its leader's most astounding paradox involves his relations with Nasser's apparent dauphin. In May 1971 Sadat was outvoted in the General Committee of the Arab Socialist Union. Four members, led by Ali Sabri, opposed union with Qadafi's Libya, which Sadat, Nasser's former plenipotentiary in Yemen, welcomed. Sadat used this expression of adverse opinion to launch his 'corrective revolution' against what he termed 'centres of power', the pressure groups which in most societies interact to produce political movement. A second astonishment, in the light of what has happened since, was Qadafi's 1971 interception of a British civilian aeroplane taking two communist leaders back to Sudan where Jaafar al-Numeiri (third of a Unionist trio) had been temporarily deposed. Returned later, when order had been restored in Khartoum, the communists were permanently silenced by hangman's rope. Numeiri was to remain attached to Sadat while Qadafi, like Nasser before him, was to discover that Arab independence could hardly survive without the Soviet counterweight.

Since the Egyptian regime refused integration with Libya on terms requiring fidelity to Nasserist principles, Qadafi has tried to write straight with crooked lines.

His apparent contradictions were recently satirised on the cover of *Rose el-Yussef*, a weekly once read throughout the Middle East but now addressing a reduced Egyptian readership bored by a unanimous press. The official cartoonist shows Qadafi squatting — not on a chamber pot, as in much Sadatist iconography — but before a battery of safes labelled: Idi Amin, Moscow, Mengistu, Castro, Ireland and Carlos. He is unlocking the last of these. Such charges are less than fair. Sir Harold Wilson long ago claimed an American provenance

for most of the arms used in Ulster, while Cairo's own record on terrorism is eccentric. After Wasfi Tell, the Jordanian prime minister, was assassinated in the Sheraton lobby in Cairo, I had no difficulty in visiting one of his personable killers in a Heliopolis flat beyond the aspirations of a non-violent weekly journalist. He told me that his guards accompanied him most evenings to the chain of nightclubs linking the pyramids to Giza. Qadafi's support for Idi Amin seemed quixotic or immoral some months ago. Yet his defence of a recognised if horrific government has cost him less than Tanzania's invasion has cost Julius Nyerere. For every westerner's favourite African-Marxist Guru one might adapt the verdict of Tacitus on Galba: "by consensus capable of liberation if he had not liberated". A bankrupt Tanzania now patronises an imposed regime almost as despotic and tribalistic as its predecessor. Cutting his losses, Qadafi has turned to other fields.

These include his own country which, when I visited it before his coup, was a desert paradise which delighted the UN officials stationed there. "With a million pounds of foreign aid," one of them told me, "and the sale of esparto grass, Libya should eventually balance its budget." With only two cities and a handful of other pleasant towns, Qadafi has produced a middleclass way of life adapted to Islamic modes. If drink and irregular sex are penalised, gone too are the days when Tobruk's water pipeline divided outside the town, one third of the supply going to the townfolk, two thirds to the nearby royal estate. An Egyptian friend who did time in a Libyan gaol said it was like a three star hotel at home, with clean sheets and blankets and a fried egg for breakfast.

A disillusioned generation of Arabs play a game which resembles the tax-exile's evening speculation: "Where can one possibly live?" The Arab game takes the form: "Which of our self-imposed leaders is the least bad?" During the many times I have heard it played, I have never heard Numeiri, Sultan Qabus, the leaders of the two Yemens or any of the Gulf sheikhs mentioned. Kuwait has a reputation as a good place but with colourless rulers. Chadli of Algeria inherits the respect felt for Boumedienne and Algeria's martyrdom. Bourguiba — "is he still alive?" — is somewhat revered by older players. But the comparative popularity stakes would be disputed between the leaders of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Libya. Iraq is admired for its support for Arab culture, the caliphal resonance of Baghdad and the recognition that it has a national plan with some prospect of achievement. Its ruthlessness is deplored. The Saudis are respected for their wealth, public decorum and a prudence which makes it hard for any one of them to emerge as a star. Yet their concern, as guardians of two of Islam's holy places, for the third has led them to withhold approval for the Camp David 'settlement', which made no mention of Jerusalem, and this has saved them from identification with America. The rigorous form of Saudi Islam seems unhysterically sane contrasted with the ecclesiastical developments in Iran. But neither Iraq nor Arabia has produced an individual with whom Arabs can easily identify. This provides Qadafi's opportunity. Refusing to wear western-style lounge suits, he prefers sandals and a near-Afro hairdo. He has the common touch and uncommon charm. The adjective most often applied to him is, curiously, T.E. Lawrence's favourite approval word: clean, or *nadheef*. Intellectuals, who admit he is sincere, are less attracted by him than mechanics or carpenters. A former Sudanese dignitary told me: "From Cairo to Khartoum people listen to Tripoli." Then added: "but chiefly for the recorded speeches of Gamal Abdul Nasser."

The Rights of the Palestinians

by Michael Adams

This is a condensed version of a paper presented to the International Colloquium on the Rights of the Palestinians held in Rome, 24-26 September.

As the search for a settlement in the Middle East drags slowly on, impeded by every kind of obstacle that selfishness, suspicion and political cowardice can put in its way, at least one central principle has at last achieved general recognition. With varying degrees of sincerity, everyone in the world now acknowledges that whatever settlement eventually emerges must take into account "the legitimate rights of the Palestinians". Nor is it any longer seriously disputed outside Israel that these legitimate rights include, in the words used by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, in the UN General Assembly on 25 September, "the right to determine their own future as a people".

So far, so good. The right of the Palestinians to self-determination is indeed an inherent right, one which has belatedly been accepted as morally and historically unassailable. As West Germany's Chancellor Schmidt said not long ago, the Palestinians have the same right to self-determination as any other people in the world, the same right as the people of West Germany.

Before the Palestinians can exercise that right, however, crucial political decisions have to be taken. In view of the stubborn resistance of the present government of Israel and the hesitancy of the United States, there is no way of telling how much longer it will be before those decisions are taken or what means will be found, once they are taken, to implement them. In the meantime, and until the wider question of Palestinian self-determination is decided, there is no reason why the world should ignore the fact that the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation are enduring a condition of servitude which is a disgrace to the international community.

It was in a concerted attempt to combat the evils of oppression and discrimination that the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted, in December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The preamble to the Declaration spoke of "the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" and declared it to be "... essential, if man is not to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law".

That idea has the closest possible relevance to the situation in the Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and to the development, over those same twelve years, of the Palestinian resistance movement. The Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are "members of the human family"; but for more than twelve years their "equal and inalienable rights" have not been "protected by the rule of law". Resistance, with all its heroism and all its brutality, has been the predictable response of those who found themselves "compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression".

The Universal Declaration, itself a masterpiece of clear and unequivocal drafting, seeks to assure everyone of the right to a nationality (article 15) and the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives (article 21). In a section dealing with

personal freedoms, it invokes the right to life, liberty and security of person (article 3); to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (article 5); to equality before the law, without any discrimination (article 7); to freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile (article 9); to a fair trial before an independent and impartial tribunal (article 10); to the protection of the law against any arbitrary interference with the individual's privacy or that of his family, home or correspondence (article 12).

In the context of particular significance for every Palestinian, the Universal Declaration assures him that everyone has the right to freedom of movement, including the right to leave his country and to return to it (article 13) and that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property (article 17). Freedom of opinion under the Universal Declaration embraces the right to hold opinions without interference and to receive and impart ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers (article 19), as well as the right to join in peaceful assembly or association (article 20). Everyone is entitled to the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality (article

"Lands are confiscated without warning and under the specious pretext of military 'security', only to be handed over to Israeli settlers as part of a bare-faced programme of colonisation which has been repeatedly condemned as illegal by the highest international authority."

22). Finally, and all-embracingly, everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised (article 28).

Consider now the situation of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. For more than twelve years they have been subjected to an alien dominion against which they have no protection. In every detail, the pattern of their daily lives is dictated by the occupation regime. Waking and sleeping they are at the mercy of a military authority which has the power – and uses it freely – to invade their homes, to arrest them, to detain them without trial, to deport them, to demolish their homes and to impose collective punishments on whole communities which impose severe physical hardship. Their publications are censored, they may not engage in political activities, their right to assemble together for any purpose is rigorously controlled. Their schools and universities are subjected to arbitrary interference which takes no account of the principle of academic freedom. Their lands are confiscated without warning and under the specious pretext of military "security", only to be handed over to Israeli settlers as part of a bare-faced programme of colonisation which has been repeatedly condemned as illegal by the highest international authority. Even the water supplies on which the Palestinian farmers depend are being diverted by the Israeli authorities to serve the interests of the Israeli settlers at the expense of the indigenous owners of the land.

These are evil practices which are inseparable from the wider evil of a military occupation. Like the occupation

Michael Adams is editor of Middle East International.

they constitute a kind of moral pollution — whose effect, as the more far-sighted Israelis are coming to realise, is to corrupt the occupiers at the same time that it injures the occupied. In the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* of 27 June 1979, Meron Benvenisti, a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, had this to say on the subject:

"The harm that twelve years of occupation has caused to Israel's moral fabric is nothing to the damage it will cause in the coming period when protest and its suppression, violence and counter-violence, are intensified in the [occupied] territories and the situation deteriorates to the point of civil rebellion, which will be answered by severe repression. The Military Government and the Defence

Establishment will have to pay the price of the annexation policy, with thousands of Israeli soldiers becoming embroiled in brutal confrontations."

That forecast seems to me likely to prove an accurate one if action is not taken soon to remedy the shocking state of affairs in the occupied territories. Nor is that all, for the very fact that a situation like this continues unchecked, and that the world knows about it but lacks the will or the power to put a stop to it, undermines the attempt to bring justice and order into international affairs. It makes it harder than ever to win the support for the unending fight against tyranny and injustice and discrimination throughout the world.

Despite common assumptions to the contrary, not all oil importers have emerged as losers from the last five years of price increases. While it is true that overall there has been a redistribution of world Gross National Income towards oil

exporters, some nations' balances of payments have actually benefited. Leaving aside the cases of particular countries, like the UK, which have become significant oil producers during this period, others have more than compensated for extra spending on oil by increased exports to oil producers and by investment and indirect payments from them. As Dr Thomas R. Stauffer of Harvard University has pointed out, these beneficiaries include one or two somewhat unexpected countries, such as India, Belgium/Luxembourg and South Korea, which are frequently regarded as the main victims of higher oil prices.

The question must now be asked, however, whether those factors which have operated so far in favour of some oil importers — the rise in volume and prices of exports to the Middle East, and the flow of return investment — will be so potent in the future. This year has seen an increase of 14.6% in the cost of uncharged Saudi Arabian marker crude. A further increase in December cannot be ruled out. But it is no longer clear that the relationship between higher oil prices and higher imports will continue.

It should be emphasised that the argument refers exclusively to balances of payments. Since the trading value of oil against real products, from turnips to tanks, has indisputably strengthened, the terms of trade have shifted sharply in the oil exporters' favour. This may mean a reduction of, or slower growth in, the real incomes of oil consumers, and an erosion in the value of capital stock.

But it does not necessarily mean that the actual balance of trade, as distinct from the terms of trade, between oil producers and consumers will deteriorate. Some countries have suffered, notably the disparate group known pseudoscientifically as the LDCs (Less Developed Countries — in plain language, the very poor) and others such as Japan which rely heavily on foreign energy.

At the same time, those which have raised exports competitively to take advantage of the huge Middle East import boom, have offset the higher cost of oil. Chief among these has been the US, not so much because its industry is more competitive than that of Japan or West Germany, but because it dominates the world arms market. If one excludes the arms trade, Germany has shown itself to be remarkably efficient at acquiring new markets.

Weapon sales show no sign of slackening. Indeed, with Egypt busily modernising its forces and tension mounting in Syria and Lebanon, the scope for this form of trade seems as

Middle East Trade & Finance

by Michael Prest

wide as ever. But whatever the merchandise, the Middle East export markets are likely to become much more competitive as the boom abates against a background of world recession. The Middle East will continue to be an expanding market,

especially in the Gulf, but the chances are that exports to the area will not offset as high a proportion of oil imports as in the past.

There are three reasons for the change. The first is that only a handful of countries in the region are managing to do better than merely maintain equilibrium in their own external payments. Saudi Arabia is the only one which still has big spending plans, and it is likely to proceed cautiously in the next five year plan because of fears about inflation and overspending. The burst of massive infrastructure development has diminished, though maintenance and consumer expenditure will clearly still be important.

A second reason why exports to the region may slow down and why the competition will be fiercer is that government and private sector cost control is increasingly effective. All governments, especially the Saudi, have taken a strong line against "excessive" prices, often with visible results. Margins are therefore being cut by government action as well as by commercial pressure.

Thirdly, many countries, particularly those which were at the centre of the biggest import boom, are now starting to manufacture for themselves some light industrial and consumer goods. Arab merchants have demonstrated an unexpected willingness to invest in industry, and small populations mean that few factories are needed to meet demand for, say, simple construction components, toiletries or household necessities. Food manufacturing and processing is also developing fast.

Much will depend on the respective timing of oil price rises, inflation among oil consumers as it affects their exports, and the oil producers' propensity to consume. It could be, for example, that the deflationary policies currently pursued by many industrial countries will reduce inflation sufficiently to prevent their export prices from keeping pace with the producers' higher revenues. If industrial countries' exports can also be maintained by cutting margins, volumes may at least be high enough to ward off unemployment, even if profits are lower.

One bright spot is the possibility that oil producers' investment in industrial countries will increase. This has already recovered from last year's low level, and may stay strong into next year. Despite pressure on their exports, therefore, the countries favoured for investment — chiefly the US and the UK — could go on enjoying balance of payments benefits from rising oil prices. Others may not be so lucky.

Middle East Books

Militant Islam

by G. H. Jansen

Pan Books, London 1979, £1.25

Iran: Dictatorship and Development (Second Edition)

by Fred Halliday

Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1979, £1.75.

These two books, written from very different viewpoints, could be said to complement each other. Halliday's is a brilliant analysis of the Pahlavi regime in Iran which just happens to have been overtaken, to its author's evident embarrassment, by an overwhelming Islamic movement that had failed to show up under his Marxist microscope. Jansen attempts a worldwide survey of, and apologia for, what he calls (without ever clearly defining it) "militant Islam", but he too seems embarrassed by the Iranian revolution, even though he is partly cashing in on it, or at least using it as a peg, with a splendid colour photograph of a rifle-toting Iranian mullah on his front cover.

Jansen takes the now-fashionable swipe at Western orientalist tradition, but remarks that H.A.R. Gibb was at least honest enough to "declare his interest" by stating that he regarded Christian doctrine as "the highest range of spiritual truth of which I can conceive". This, Jansen says, is "something that should be demanded of present-day Islamists". Alas, he fails to conform to his own precept, other than by an oblique reference in his dedication to the fact that his wife is a *Hajja*. It remains unclear throughout the book whether he himself is, or wishes to be thought of as, a Muslim — though as an Indian working for *The Economist* he clearly considers himself well placed to interpret Third World movements to Western readers.

My conclusion from internal evidence is that he does think of himself as a Muslim, but a daringly heterodox one, since he considers himself entitled to offer advice and reproaches of a type that he condemns as patronising and arrogant when they emanate from non-Muslim sources. He dismisses with contempt some earlier attempts to reinterpret Islam to satisfy Western scruples — notably those of Muhammad Iqbal and Sayyid Ahmad Khan — but in the end comes out himself for a revision of Islam so sweeping that it would involve discarding substantial parts of the Koran. "Muslim reformers," he writes, "have been looking for a Luther ever since the time of Afghani; they should also be looking for a Barth, a Niebuhr, a Temple and a Mauriac." Yet elsewhere he contrasts the "bold militant assertiveness" of Islam with the "defensive apologetic withdrawal" of Christianity, and even asserts that "inter-faith tolerance and ecumenical movements are sure indications of a slackening of belief". Dare one suggest that, if Muslims were to follow Jansen's advice and start to pick and choose their Koranic texts, they would also betray a "slackening of belief", comparable to that revealed in the heart of the Anglican Church by *The Myth of God Incarnate*?

Jansen is anxious to convince his Western readers that "militant Islam", by which he means essentially the reassertion of the primacy of Islam within the state and the community, is by and large a good thing. But in the process

of doing this he finds himself confusing "militant" with "modernist", because it is actually the modernisers or "re-thinkers" of Islam whom he finds personally most sympathetic. He is thus led into the absurdity of calling Islam in Afghanistan the "opposite" of militant, simply because it is "orthodox and traditional"; and while Bazargan's Iran Liberation Movement fits admirably into his category (alongside the Egyptian *Ikhwan*, the Party for the Liberation of Islam in Jordan, the *Jamaat i Islami* in Pakistan, the Masjumi Party in Indonesia, the group around the late Allal al Fassi in Morocco and "with reservations" the Libya of Colonel Qaddafi) Khomeini clearly does not. Consequently he has to be written off rather glibly as "a perfect example of the operation of the 'Peter Principle', by which people with some ability must necessarily, because of their ambition, be promoted beyond their capacity".

Khomeini certainly is an awkward customer, having established himself as the incontrovertible leader of a revolution which other people consider should have been theirs, and then proceeded to lead it in his own way without the slightest concession to other people's principles. Halliday also has to wrestle with this problem in the afterword which he has added to his book for the new edition. (In the previous one, published last December, Khomeini was not mentioned at all.) "It cannot be emphasized often enough," he says, "that the Islamic character of the movement, and in particular Khomeini's leadership, were relatively late in establishing themselves... In addition, by being forced to move from Iraq to Paris, Khomeini acquired an international significance that he had not previously had." This sounds a little desperate: *Le Monde* after all had interviewed Khomeini in Najaf in May 1978, and in September its correspondent was reporting that the streets of Tehran belonged to Khomeini and not to the Shah.

Halliday is left hoping that the Iranian people will "fulfil the further potential for social transformation that has been revealed by their victory over the Pahlavi monarch", while Jansen wants to see "the Khomeini komitehs... replaced by a combined group formed of the more intelligent and broad-minded Ayatollahs, such as Telegani (alas!) and Shariat Medari, and by the Bazargan party". Personally I should like to see a liberal democracy with Hedayatollah Matindaftari as prime minister. But I fear that all three of us are to be disappointed.

Edward Mortimer

Saudi Arabia. Past and Present by Shirley Kay and Malin Basil, Namara Publications, London, 1979.

Although reasonably priced and attractively designed, this book is unlikely to stand out from others which have been published in recent years. As a tourist guide, it tells us of some of the major sights in the country and describes some monuments or old places which are worthy of visit; it also indicates what types of souvenirs are worth looking for and we are given a touch of local colour in the descriptions of streets and picturesque clothing, jewellery and daggers. The main archaeological sites are introduced with their history and features.

While the text actually mentions various stages of Saudi history, the illustrations, with one exception, all concern aspects of traditional life. Judging from the book, one would imagine that Saudi Arabia's architecture still consists of locally manufactured mud-brick buildings in traditional style with a few 'Seven Up' adverts stuck on the walls. The twentieth century certainly doesn't seem to have arrived; we see drawings which exude an atmosphere of peace and quiet in a traditional rural setting with an occasional figure wandering through a well-stocked but deserted souk. The motor car and the traffic jam are nowhere to be found.

Both the text and the drawings are equally bland and depersonalised. Just as the text makes no room for people and their lives and problems, the drawings show people from behind or without any distinctive features, as though they

were shadows. These bare outlines give an impression of space which contrasts vividly with the real crowding and bustle of Arab cities. The distance which is produced by these depersonalised drawings, and is found also in the writer's inability to present us with any human feeling, may be a reflection of the writer and the illustrator's refusal to confront Saudi Arabia as a fascinating country with major problems. Neither political, social or economic issues are raised beyond the level of an occasional mention and there is no discussion of the country's development and change in the last few decades. Controversial issues such as the position of women, the system of justice, the role of religion, or the type of government go unmentioned. Rather, the authors have chosen to penetrate no further than the outer cloaks of the faceless people they have drawn.

David Marlay

Middle East Reporter

27 September

Khomeini envoy expelled Kuwait deports the special representative of Ayatollah Khomeini on the grounds that he has been stirring up unrest among Kuwait's Shia minority.

Assad announces reform The Syrian leadership announces a series of political and bureaucratic reforms in an apparent attempt to check rising discontent. These include a purge of the civil service, improvement of the economy, and the ample provision of basic commodities. The government also blames the Muslim Brotherhood for all the recent disorders and calls for the nation to rally around the Assad regime. Meanwhile a right-wing Christian radio station in Lebanon reports clashes between Sunni and Alawite soldiers serving with Syrian troops in Lebanon.

Autonomy disagreement At the end of their sixth round of negotiations, Egypt and Israel disagree over the amount of power to be exercised by Palestinians under self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza.

Eitan accused again 150 Israeli university teachers and students send a letter to the Israeli defence minister accusing Chief of Staff Eitan of showing unwarranted clemency to an unidentified senior officer convicted of the murder of two Lebanese civilians in March 1978.

Algerians snub Egyptians At the Mediterranean Games being held in Split, Yugoslavia, the Algerian handball team refuses to play the Egyptians.

Dayan praises Carter In a widely-reported interview, Moshe Dayan says the Carter administration has done more for Israel than any previous US administration. He also hints that Israel might

consider talking to the PLO if it became a purely political organisation.

28 September

NIOC chief sacked Iranian Prime Minister Bazargan dismisses National Iranian Oil Company chief Hassan Nazih and names a new oil minister to head all oil, gas and petrochemical industries. Nazih is ordered to appear in court to answer charges based on NIOC workers' complaints. Meanwhile fresh violence and executions take place in Mahabad. An influential Iranian weekly accuses the authorities of trying to "sweep the minorities under the prayer rug".

Arafat for France The Palestinian information agency Wafa announces that Yasser Arafat has accepted an invitation to visit France in the near future from French communist leader Georges Marchais. This follows a recent PLO statement in Paris that Arafat would accept an invitation only from the French president.

Tel Aviv blasts 6 people are injured in 2 explosions caused by primitive explosive devices left in public places during the Tel Aviv rush hour.

Begin polls lowest ever A *Ha'aretz* poll shows Prime Minister Begin's personal popularity at an all-time low. This is seen as a reflection of public disgust at the state of economy. Meanwhile, government sources hint at the pending resignation of Finance Minister Simcha Erlich.

Dayan at UN Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan tells the United Nations General Assembly that the establishment of a Palestinian state is out of the question. He reiterates Israel's refusal to deal with the PLO, and claims that his remarks reported yesterday were not intended

to cast doubt on this point.

29 September

Syrian arrests 52 Syrian officials are arrested for "a variety of offences", including corruption, overstepping their authority on missions abroad, and smuggling.

Lebanese army in Tyre The Lebanese army, by agreement with the PLO, reoccupies military barracks in Tyre guarded by UNIFIL troops, although they do not yet have control of the city. However the PLO is said to be reluctant to allow the army to return to Nabatiyeh or to the Château Beaufort strongpoint.

Khaled for Libya King Khaled of Saudi Arabia flies to Libya for a 2-day visit and a possible meeting with Colonel Gaddafi.

Jackson mediation offer Following a 2-hour meeting with Yasser Arafat in Beirut, US black leader Jesse Jackson offers to mediate between the US government and the PLO. The PLO's UN observer in New York says he hopes soon to open a PLO office in Harlem.

30 September

Iran communications attacked A microwave communications station in Khuzestan is blown up, seriously disrupting communications between Khorramshahr and Abadan and the rest of the country. Meanwhile the sacked NIOC chief Nazih is reported to have gone into hiding rather than face charges of treason which carry the death sentence. In Tehran, Mustafa Ali Chamran, Iran's new and first civilian defence minister, announces he is to purge the armed forces, starting at the top.

1 October

Libyan oil cutbacks Libya notifies most of its oil customers that they should expect sizeable cutbacks in long-term purchases, effective from the end of the year. This is seen as a move to deprive the multinational oil companies of their middleman role and to enable Libya to sell more on the spot market.

RCD future to be discussed Turkey and Pakistan agree to hold a ministerial meeting on the future of the Regional Cooperation for Development organisation. The third member, Iran, has so far not agreed to join any attempt to revive the RCD.

2 October

\$5bn Sinai oil deal President Sadat says Prime Minister Mustafa Khalil is holding talks with an unnamed group for the sale of oil from wells in Sinai, including those due to be returned by Israel on 26 November. The deal involves advance payment to Egypt of \$5bn, to be repaid from oil production.

Pope calls for peace Addressing the United Nations General Assembly, the Pope calls for a "general overall peace" in the Middle East, to include the just settlement of the Palestinian question.

Iran "ready for war" Iranian Defence Minister Chamran declares Iran is ready to go to war if Iraq's military threats continue. At the same time Islamic revolutionary guards leader Abu Sharif says the guards will never rest until the complete liberation of Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Eritrea, the Philippines and Iraq is achieved. Meanwhile guardsmen in Tehran fire into the air to disperse a demonstration outside the prime minister's house against unemployment.

Israel on Syrian arms Israeli military intelligence reports that Syria has strengthened its forces with the MiG-25 bomber-interceptor, Sokhoi 22s and "at least a hundred" T-72 tanks.

Iraq's plea Iraqi Foreign Minister Saadoun Hammadi says Iraq will lead a campaign to persuade Arab oil producers to use their resources for political ends.

US troops for Sinai It is announced that an agreement was reached last week between Israeli Foreign Minister Dayan and US Secretary of State Vance under which US troops will be placed in Sinai and will play a direct part in supervising the Israeli withdrawal and controlling the separation of Israeli and Egyptian forces in the area.

Sadat appeals to PLO President Sadat gives US black leader Jesse Jackson a message for Yasser Arafat, urging the PLO to declare a ceasefire in the guerrilla

war against Israel, and offering to move the peace talks to Geneva, Cairo, El Arish or elsewhere to suit the PLO. Jackson claims that Arafat has told him he will settle for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, thus implicitly acknowledging the state of Israel.

3 October

Iranian attacks Kurdish secessionists attack government forces in a number of towns in north-west Iran. In Khuzestan a time-bomb sets a train on fire: 8 people die. Meanwhile military circles are reported to be concerned over the recently-announced purge within the army.

Libya cancels deals Libya announces it will cancel oil sales contracts with a number of international oil companies and will deal instead with national companies on a government-to-government basis.

US-Iran agreement Washington and Tehran agree on the appointment of Bruce Laingen, hitherto US chargé d'affaires in Tehran, as the new US ambassador to Iran.

Moscow Olympics denial The Olympic organising committee in Moscow denies that the PLO has been invited to take part in next year's Olympic Games, despite earlier PLO claims to the contrary. But Moscow does not rule out the possibility that the PLO may be offered observer status at the Games.

Egypt blocks Iraq's money Egypt announces that it will not repay \$30m placed on special deposit by Iraq at the Cairo Central Bank. Called to account by Iraq before the IMF, Egypt invokes the "national interest clause".

4 October

Iran executions 8 Arabic-speaking Iranians are executed as a result of yesterday's explosion on a Tehran-bound train in Khuzestan. Meanwhile in Tehran a letter is published from ousted NIOC chief Hassan Nazih saying it would not be safe for him to come out of hiding. In Vienna, the Iranian deputy economic minister says the NIOC is trying to recruit British and American technicians for crucial pumping and maintenance posts. He adds that Iran is selling up to 15% of its oil exports on the spot market.

Rabin Palestine plan Former Israeli premier Yitzhak Rabin proposes the establishment of Israeli-Jordanian trusteeship over the West Bank and Gaza, maintaining that if returned to power the Labour Party would pursue such a policy.

5 October

\$38 for spot crude Iran asks Japan to pay \$38 per barrel for spot purchases of light crude, and \$36 for heavy. Meanwhile in Vienna OPEC is divided over whether or not to shift from dollars to a basket of currencies.

PLO ceasefire The PLO announces it will observe a ceasefire in southern Lebanon. The move, announced after talks between Yasser Arafat and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, is seen as aimed at opening negotiations with the US government.

Bazargan: "no Gulf ambitions" Iranian Prime Minister Bazargan says Iran has no ambitions in the Gulf region. He adds that statements by Iranian religious authorities are not necessarily government policy, and have no official weight or significance. Meanwhile time-bomb explodes in a Khorramshahr bazaar, killing at least 2 people and injuring many more.

Algerian cutbacks From 1 January, Algeria is to cut back oil sales by around 5%. This follows a 20% reduction over the second half of this year.

6 October

PLO on ceasefire The PLO explains that the ceasefire to which it has agreed applies strictly to southern Lebanon only, and does not mean that the Palestinian guerrillas will abandon their struggle against Israel or demobilise.

Ecevit reverse With crucial by-elections due on 14 October, Turkish Interior Minister Gunes is forced to resign after an alleged sex scandal. This is seen as further endangering Prime Minister Ecevit's precarious parliamentary majority.

Israel cover-up revealed The Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* reports that another senior army officer is serving a 30 month gaol sentence for murdering Lebanese civilians last year. His wife is said to have asked the prime minister and the defence minister to pardon him, but they are reported to have said they have "no authority" for such action. The paper claims military censorship has so far kept the affair concealed.

7 October

Israeli plane downed The Israeli air force says an unpiloted reconnaissance aircraft armed with cameras disappears over Syria or Lebanon while investigating reports of a massive build-up of Soviet military equipment near Homs. Damascus reports that Syrian fighters down the plane near the capital.

... accepts US plan The Israeli Cabinet accepts in principle the US-proposed Sinai peace-keeping plan, provided the US supplies a binding written commitment to establish a multinational force when the Israeli withdrawal is completed.

Kurdish attack Kurdish secessionist fighters attack 70 Islamic revolutionary guards as they travel in an armoured convoy. Tehran Radio reports at least 22 guards dead, and many more wounded or taken hostage. The radio also announces that in western Azerbaijan some 150 motorists have been kidnapped on a main road, and that their fate is so far not known.

8 October

Kuwaiti price hike Kuwait announces an oil price rise to \$21.50 a barrel. Observers see Kuwait as taking a lead which other OPEC members are likely to follow, and note that the new price does not exceed the OPEC maximum of \$24 agreed last June.

Lebanon tension In northern Lebanon, Phalangist forces take hostage a number of supporters of former president Franjeh, whose own followers retaliate by kidnapping scores of people at "flying" roadblocks. Syrian forces are reported to have gone to the area in an effort to secure their mutual release.

UK warns PLO A British Foreign Office official visiting Beirut says Britain will refuse to talk with the PLO as long as there is a possibility of its being linked with Irish terrorists. He adds that it would be "a great help" if the PLO accepted that part of Resolution 242 dealing with secure frontiers for Israel.

Anglican bishop held The head of the Anglican church in Iran is detained in Isfahan by revolutionary court officials. His wife says they are demanding about £750,000 belonging to a former Christian hospital in Shiraz. The bishop refuses, arguing that the money is diocesan rather than communal property.

9 October

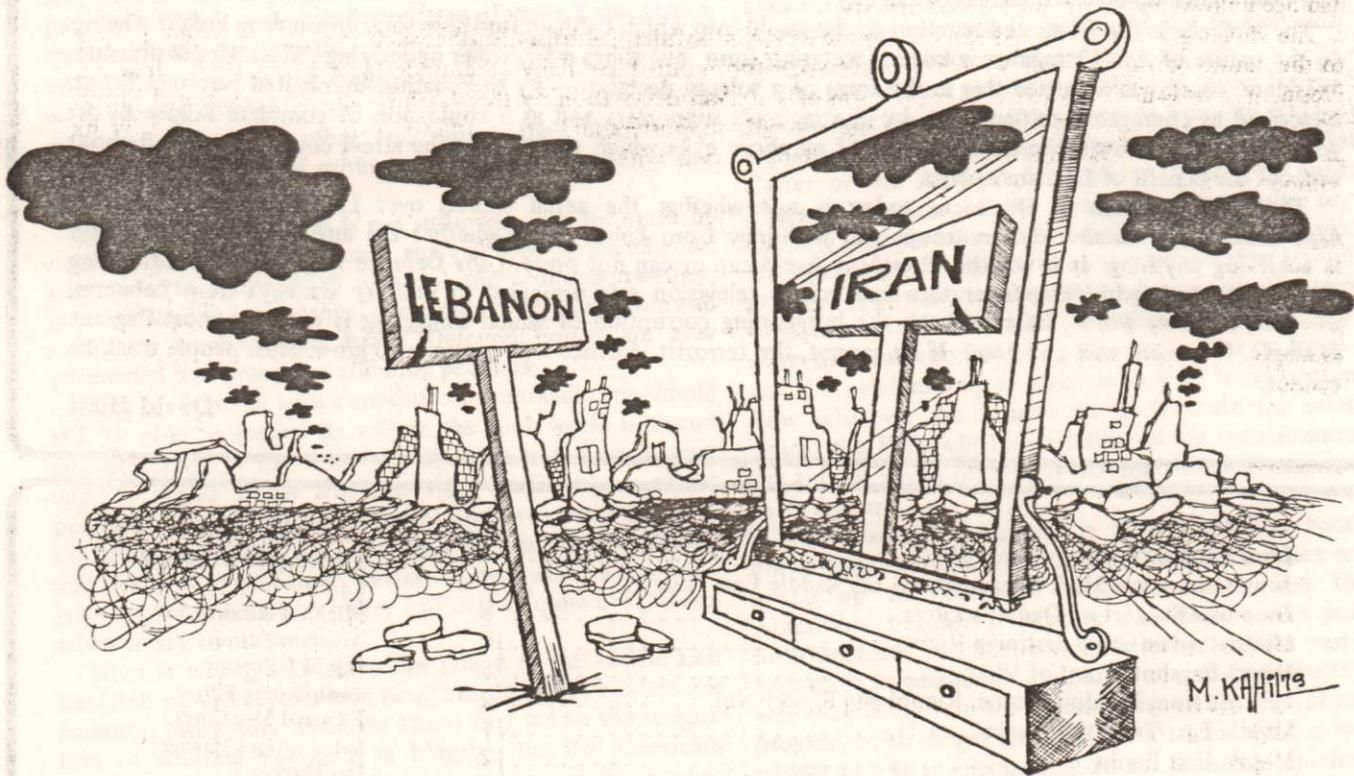
Polisario "defeat" Morocco announces a major victory over the Polisario at Smara, about 100 miles east of Al Ayoun, with more than 1,000 Polisario fighters killed and significant loss of equipment and armour. Morocco offers to conduct journalists to the battlefield to view the evidence. The Polisario, however, claim that they have captured Smara themselves and have inflicted a heavy defeat on the Moroccan army. **Egypt and Israel slate Europe** Senior Egyptian and Israeli officials concur in criticising west European attitudes towards their peace treaty. Boutros

Ghali accuses west European leaders of blindly echoing Arab demands without taking account of practical realities. Moshe Dayan claims Israel deserves "more support" for its position. Both leaders are in Strasbourg to address the Council of Europe tomorrow.

10 October

Kurdistan Tehran announces that newly-appointed Defence Minister Chamran is to fly to Kurdistan personally to supervise the carrying of the war against the secessionists "from the towns into the mountains". A revolutionary guards commander announces that the Kurdish guerrillas will be crushed with artillery and aircraft within the next few days, but admits that the job will be difficult as the Kurds control all local telecommunications and therefore have advance warning of operations against them.

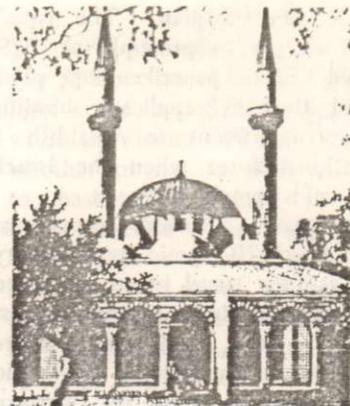
West Bank land occupied Jewish settlers near Nablus occupy an olive-grove belonging to an Arab community and erect 2 huts. They claim that the Israeli government has allocated them insufficient land for their settlement, and say they are also protesting against the possibility of the creation of a Palestinian state. A military detachment asks them to leave but they refuse.



"Through a Glass Darkly"

Letter From...

Damascus



It has become a tradition: President Assad always attends the first night of Duraïd Lahham's plays, and last week he was there for the third of them since the October 1973 war. 'Cheers, Homeland' is probably the finest play that this Charlie Chaplin of the Arab World has yet done. It is a brilliant, incisive satire on the present Arab condition, which, apart from a slight bias against President Sadat, is admirably impartial in its treatment of Arab regimes – mentioning none but savaging all, Assad's included. "We apply self-censorship" he said, but, even so, it is remarkable how much he gets away with in his lampooning of fat bureaucrats, ranting ideologues and vindictive policemen who – it is clear from the delighted audience – are instantly recognisable types of everyday experience. All seats are booked for two weeks ahead. After Damascus, Lahham tours various Arab countries, evoking the same enthusiastic response in the Maghreb and the Mashraq, or even in West and East Beirut.

"I think President Assad learns something from us." If so, it is high time, for the world which Lahham so uproariously, and sometimes so poignantly, captures, is taking less and less funny forms, as you notice as soon as you leave the theatre.

Next door is one of the headquarters of Rifaat Assad, the brother of the President and commander of the Defence Regiments, the regime's Praetorian guard. Walk too close to the building and you will be seen off by young vigilantes with Kalashnikovs who do not bother to wear uniforms and disport themselves with a ruffianly machismo all too reminiscent of Lebanon at the height of the civil war. You find their type all over Damascus lurking in doorways and behind railings. They are there to guard against assassinations and other forms of terrorism. There is usually one killing every week or so and the assailants are assumed to be Sunni Muslim extremists. The victims are almost always Alawites and, whatever their relationship with the regime, chosen for that reason only. They are often gunned down in crowded streets in broad daylight. The assassins usually get away, for the populace has more sympathy for them than it does for the police.

Other forms of violence in the past fortnight include a shoot-out around the five-star Vendome Hotel between men of the Defence Regiments and the military police. Hostages were taken. By contemporary Syrian standards, it may have been a minor incident in itself, but as a portent of things to come it is probably not. For it is no secret that there are virtually two armies in Syria today.

There was also a gigantic explosion at two thirty one morning. Next day the word was that an ammunition dump had been blown up on the outskirts of the city.

The violence is the frustrated reaction to the world into which Lahham furnishes such an amusing insight. Owing to the nature of Assad's regime, it takes a sectarian form, but it has many other underlying causes. Under pressure, President Assad has admitted this in the form of a solemn declaration by the Baathist-dominated National Front. Described as courageous self-criticism by the regime's supporters and as a confession of complete failure by its adversaries, it acknowledges the existence of all those evils which the man in the street could tell you all about without the benefit of Lahham's plays.

The great question in Damascus today is not whether the aerial clashes over Lebanon portend another Arab-Israeli war, whether Syrian troops will withdraw from Lebanon, or whether the anti-Sadat Arab coalition is achieving anything. It is whether President Assad can or can not prevent the Defence Regiments from flooding the market with whisky, refrigerators and colour television sets smuggled in military convoys from Lebanon; whether, in other words, he can check the burgeoning corruption of which smuggling is only the most flagrant example. If he can, well and good. If he cannot, the terrorist violence will continue to grow. Most people think he cannot.

David Hirst

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