

A very courageous voice for change

Teaching Americans a word

The word is 'courage'.

THESSE are the concluding paragraphs to a very unusual, and quite unprecedented, pamphlet just published in the United States.

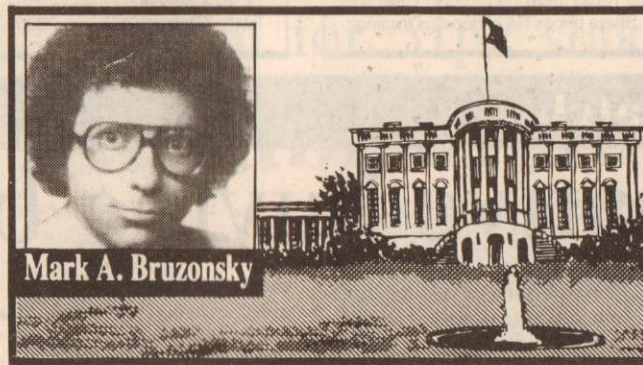
But these are not the words of an Arab-American or even of a person who has been involved in the past in Mid-east affairs or the Palestinian issue.

Nor is this pamphlet published by one of the various Arab-American groups who in recent months since the beginning of the Intifada have begun competing to show their concern for the Palestinian predicament after years of lethargy.

Rather, these are the words of a 74-year-old legal scholar and judicial activist whose name is well-known and respected in American legal circles — Professor Charles L. Black, Jr, Sterling Professor Emeritus from the Yale University Law School, one of the leading intellectual centres of legal scholarship in the US today.

And rather than carrying the imprimatur of one of the Arab-American groups this 28-page pamphlet is surprisingly published by a new organisation of American Jewish professors and intellectuals, The Jewish Committee On The Middle East—JCOME.

From



Washington

Eventhough American society as a whole — especially its political representatives who gather in this capital — has not moved very far in altering basic attitudes toward Israel in the wake of the ongoing Intifada, there are important pockets of major reevaluation.

Professor Charles Black's pamphlet represents the cutting edge of such thought and concern. And its publication by JCOME is a very unusual step by a growing group of American Jews that includes Jewish professors at over 125 universities throughout the United States.

Charles Black, over the past

four decades, has made a distinguished name for himself as a leading expert in constitutional law and Human Rights issues. Upon retirement a few years ago, the *Yale Law Review* devoted an entire issue to reflections on his career.

Now, after considerable hesitation and soul-searching, Black is putting in print, with elaborate argumentation and reasoning, his considered view that the "Special Relationship" that today binds the US and Israel ought to be brought to an end.

To use Professor Black's own words, from the opening para-

A 74-year-old American legal scholar and widely respected expert in constitutional law and human rights issues finds one word that explains the behaviour of the Intifada children and wants the Americans to know that word.

graph to his pamphlet, "I believe that the so-called 'Special Relationship' now assumed to connect the United States and Israel ought to be radically rethought, in all its aspects and clear down to its deepest foundations. I believe such a rethinking would sooner or later put an end to this 'Special Relationship' in anything at all like its present form".

An unusual combination of circumstances lies behind the publication and promotion of Black's unprecedented pamphlet which is titled *Let Us Rethink Our 'Special Relationship' With Israel*.

Black himself has had very

little contact with the Mid-east or with Palestinians. He is not Jewish, though his wife, the dean of the Columbia University Law School, is. But Black has been troubled by the hypocrisy involved in how the US deals with Israel for some time, and the Intifada propelled him to write this essay which is finally getting into print.

"Finally", that is, because it was actually mostly written nearly a year ago.

But even with distinguished reputation, and his extensive bibliography taking up more than 15 pages of small type, over a period of more than half a year Black was unable to find an American publication willing to publish these controversial views.

It was at that time that JCOME, of which this writer is among the leaders, stepped into the void and decided that the problems Black was having were precisely a manifestation of why opinion remains so retarded and so uninformed here in the US concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and that something had to be done about this.

More next week about the intellectual and political importance of this particular pamphlet and the slowly changing political circumstances that finally resulted in its publication.

Against huge odds, quite without real weapons or any other resources, they at last decline to submit, and instead go out on the streets and pick up stones. They are beaten without let or mercy. They are imprisoned under obscene conditions, after kangaroo trials, or no trials at all. Many are maimed; many are disfigured for life. Yet they come out in the streets again and again, these young people, some not much more than children, and they pick up stones.

What name shall we give to the trait of character that produces conduct like that?

Why do you hesitate? You know what the word is. Do you hesitate because that word just never happens to be spoken in America in application to these young Palestinian people? Or is it because you fear that a revolution in your thought and feeling will have to follow pronouncing the word?

Well, you're very likely right about that last. That makes you nervous? So let me help you. I'll start things off by saying the word for you the first time.

The word is 'courage'.