

Israeli Left Tries Something New

By Mark A. Bruzonsky

Recently a group of progressive Israelis, took a very unusual step . . . unusual in a number of ways.

First they made an appeal directly to the American Congress. That in itself, for a private group of Israeli citizens, is rather extraordinary.

Second they asked, actually pleaded with, the American Congress to withhold something from Israel. It's hard to remember any time in the past when Israelis have asked the American Congress not to provide something.

This latest nuance in the complicated American-Israeli relationship came in the form of an "Open Letter to Members of Congress."

The "Open Letter" was organized primarily by Reserve Major General Mattityahu Peled, currently Professor of Arabic Literature at Tel Aviv University, whose recent interview with me was featured just a few weeks ago in this newspaper.

Here are key sections of the "Open Letter":

"Out of our deep concern for

From



Washington

the fate of our country, we — a group of Jewish Israeli citizens — feel that the time has come to address you," the "Open Letter" begins.

"Since its founding, our country has been at war with its neighbors. In its isolated position and burdened with huge military expenses, it could maintain itself only thanks to foreign aid, which in the last two decades has been generously provided by the United States. In fact, due to your willingness to provide that aid to our country, Israel has become the largest recipient per capita of U.S. aid.

grettably include the policy of gradually annexing the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Such annexation is affected by setting up new settlements and creating an expanding Jewish presence in those territories. With American money, the government is able to offer housing . . . Such a policy inevitably entails gross violation of human rights of the indigenous Palestinian population of the Occupied Territories, whose land is expropriated so that the new Jewish settlements may be established.

"All this is done openly, with the knowledge of the entire Israeli

"By virtue of this policy," the "Open Letter" continues, "the U.S. has assumed a considerable responsibility. It is with American money that the government of Israel can pursue its policies, which re-

population," the 15 brave signers of this unprecedented "Open Letter" — mostly professors and writers — add in their prefatory comments.

"The United States cannot shrug off a degree of responsibility for the way its money is used. Against the wishes of at least half of Israel's own citizens, the government maintains a policy which is detrimental to the chances for peace in our region. It can afford to do so only thanks to the continued flow of unconditional American aid. Indeed, peace initiatives — such as the one presently undertaken by Secretary of State Baker — stand no chance of success as long as the Shamir government persists in its unrealistic and irresponsible "Greater Israel" policy. This policy is directly responsible now for the daily hardships caused by a violent conflict which is being unnecessarily perpetuated at a time when — at long last — there seems to exist a real chance to bring it to an end and start a process aimed at achieving peace. Needless to add that with the elimination of the chances for peace, the danger of another war becomes imminent."