

After the detention

IN an important sense—it seems to me upon considerable reflection—the Palestinian *Intifada* is succeeding in that it is undermining Israel's collective balance and perspective.

This is my overall impression after spending nearly two months in Israel and occupied Palestine this year, and one that was finally stimulated by my own involvement with "security" persons at Ben-Gurion Airport a few days ago.

I'm no stranger to Israel or to "security". I've travelled widely and often throughout the Middle East and by rough estimate I've been to Israel or occupied Palestine more than 100 times since 1971.

Initially I travelled there as a representative of the International Student Movement for the United Nations, then as Washington Associate of the World Jewish Congress (back in the good old days of Nahum Goldmann and Philip Klutznick). I arranged with Anwar Sadat for him to send the first public telegram to Israel in the days just before his first visit to occupied Jerusalem. And in more recent years I've travelled throughout the Middle East as Associate Editor of *Worldview Magazine*, as Interview Editor of *The Middle East Magazine* in London, or as a weekly columnist. Along the way I've met with and interviewed prime ministers, kings and presidents.

So I think I'm in a personal position to put things in perspective and try to understand why things are happening. But before doing so, a few facts are in order about the recent incident at Israel's airport, especially as Israeli officials have planted fallacious stories about me in recent days in a rather transparent cover-up and disinformation effort.

First of all, I've been around for too long now to be totally surprised by what's happening. Just in the few weeks I was recently in Israel and occupied Palestine so many investigations of illegality, deaths, and scandal were underway. As I wrote this, morning news services on September 14, indicated that seven Palestinians were killed by Israelis on September 13. And the latest scandal is about reports that body organs might be being clandestinely taken from Palestinian corpses for surreptitious transplant to Jews.

names of persons I had met with and persons who were my friends. I repeatedly told them I was glad to comply with all security procedures as I had always done; that they could open and search my suitcases and myself as they wished; but that I would not be intimidated by them, that as a matter of principle I would not discuss with them whom I had met with, nor would I turn over to them any of my personal notes or information for zeroxing as has sometimes been forced of others.

The end result was that the person who said he was head of airport security—but who wore no identifying insignia of any kind, who was dressed as a tourist, who refused to provide any identification of any kind, and who acted in a more totalitarian manner than anyone I've previously met in such a capacity during my considerable travels worldwide—told me I would have to answer *all* his questions whatever they were and that I would have to give him *whatever* information he demanded or he would *not* let me leave Israel.

I contacted the American Embassy for help—the first time I have ever had to do so in some 20 years of world travel—and they immediately were lied to by Israeli officials who told them I had refused to open my suitcases. By the time this was happening I had already been forced to miss my plane—probably their goal as a way of asserting that they are in charge—and so I went to the embassy, filed an affidavit, and contacted persons in the press and friends.

When the Associated Press wrote a story about my being

I was detained at Ben-Gurion airport by "security" personnel. I was not the first such person; even the American diplomats are helpless in Israel. A consul at the US embassy in Tel Aviv told me that she herself has been questioned for over an hour and given the names of persons she knows and meets with. Many others with fewer connections and less experience than myself are grilled for hours at the airport, being made to feel like criminals simply because they have Palestinian friends or because they met with unpopular persons in Israel, or simply because they refuse to accept degrading and intimidating treatment. In some cases this harassment takes the form of hours of questioning with repeated questions about where did you go and whom did you visit with and why. In other cases taking of papers and notebooks and address books seems to be the goal, apparently for xeroxing and intelligence work.

Israel's growing 'disorientation'

But the details of this particular incident are not what is crucial though I would welcome a serious investigation of the growing harassment and intimidation at Ben-Gurion Airport; of the methods that today go far beyond any reasonable "security" definition, are often-times carried out in a very heavy-handed fashion, and in my judgement are clearly part of a broader plan for intelligence gathering and political intimidation.

Indeed I think it is Israelis themselves who should be most concerned. I've rarely experienced anything so shocking as the conduct of some Israeli security officials. When "security" is allowed to become the cover all justifying many forms of "official" misconduct and political intimidation, it is Israelis themselves who should rise up and begin demanding civility...and honesty.

Fortunately, there are still many Israelis who agree with me. The greatest concern about what I experienced came not from the American embassy—where a consul told me that she herself has been questioned for over an hour and given the names of persons she knows and meets with—but from a number of Israelis connected with the Israeli Civil Liberties Association.

Unfortunately, there is very little then can do other than the very expensive and difficult process of bringing a test case before the Israeli high court which, in a few instances, has tried to stem the general climate of lawlessness and abuse all in the name of "security."

surface still seems normal but just below the surface is becoming disoriented. The talk of "civil war", a term even Israel's President Chaim Herzog has used in public, is not frivolous.

In my case there was some intimidation, a missed plane, and a slanderous, deceitful cover-up—all possibly the result of my involvement in recent months in a new group of American Jews calling for an end to the "Special Relationship" with Israel and my more outspoken advocacy of Palestinian rights.

Many others with fewer connections and less experience than myself are grilled for hours at the airport, being made to feel like criminals simply because they have a Palestinian friend or because they met with unpopular persons in Israel, or simply because they refuse to accept degrading and intimidating treatment.

More outrageous still some persons—simply to get on their plane on time—are forced to hand over personal information, notes and address books which are then taken for copying and then become part of the larger campaign to destroy Palestinian nationalism.

Of course all this is quite minor in comparison to the lawless and brutal conduct of Israelis towards Palestinians. Nevertheless, I am convinced that what happened to me a few days ago was not an aberration but rather part of a mushrooming pattern of steps all designed to collect as much intelligence information as possible and make life more difficult for those who most oppose Israeli policies.

though he is an American citizen and there were no specific charges against him. Additionally, Israeli troops and secret police have masqueraded as tourists and as journalists in ongoing attempts to create confusion and cut off easy access to Palestinians. The most recent case of this was in Bethlehem when what were thought to be tourists took automatic guns out of their backpacks and opened fire killing a number of persons and wounding many others.

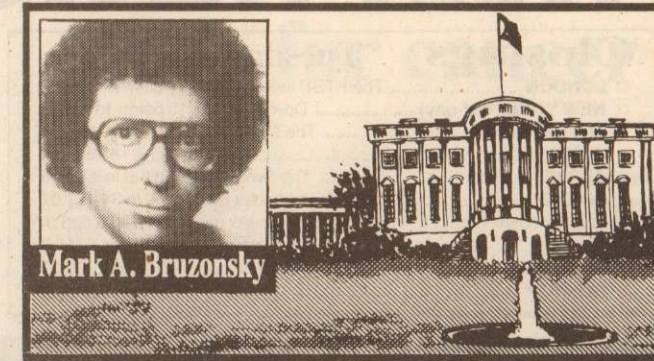
And while all this is taking place, now it seems there is also a unpublicised campaign to harass and intimidate persons who are friends of those on the Israeli left or Palestinians.

The Israelis very much want American Jewish tourists to keep coming to Israeli cities and hotels, spending their dollars and visiting their relatives. They also want to keep the flow of Christian pilgrims visiting the holy sites in occupied Jerusalem and Nazereth and Bethlehem. But friends of those struggling on the Israeli left, and friends of the Palestinians—that's another matter.

Of course I have been aware of these developments for some time now; but admittedly it was my own recent experience with Israeli "security" at the airport that provoked me to analyse these issues more carefully and to talk with many others about them.

Furthermore, upon continuing reflection, I now recall that earlier this year something similar

From



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happened to me though that time the security people were at least properly identified and in the end relented.

That time, after the security check and after checking-in the Pan Am I was proceeding to passport control upstairs, boarding pass in hand and bags checked, when I was taken from the passport line to a special room and told I must fill out a long form if I wanted to go through passport control and get on my flight.

The form was in Hebrew and apparently had something to do with listing all the places I had been and whom I had met with. I simply told the security person I wouldn't fill it out unless they told me what it had to do with airport security and unless they read me the full form so I would know what all the questions were about.

The woman refused to read me the form but simply said the head of airport security had told her I must fill it out. So I sat there for about 15-minutes and was getting very nervous about missing my flight when the security chief came up from downstairs. He came over to me, stared at me, talked in Hebrew with the woman, and then said: "There has been a mistake and you can go." I told him I was very surprised by all this and that the woman had specifically told me it was he who had ordered that I had to fill out the form. But he repeated his statement about "a mistake" and finally off I went to passport control and

that was that.

Furthermore, I have heard from others who have Palestinian friends and who are associated with The Jewish Committee On The Middle East—the association of American Jews calling for a major cut in aid to Israel—that in the guise of "security" at the airport there appears to be a growing pattern of harassment and intelligence collection. Indeed, an American woman had called me just before my trip, quite shaken that she had been held and interrogated for hours with her papers taken from her for copying she thought.

In some cases this harassment takes the form of hours of questioning with repeated questions about where did you go and whom did you visit with and why. In other cases taking of papers and notebooks and address books seems to be the goal, apparently for zeroxing and intelligence work.

To sum up, I've watched over the past two decades as under the rubric of "security" a culture of political thugary and neo-totalitarian conduct has emerged in Israel; just as the "security" argument for the occupied territories has become the excuse for so much terrible conduct, abuses that now border on the threshold of war crimes even according to some leading Israeli personalities.

Inside Israel today—even among Jews in their conduct with one another—the culture of violence and intimidation is having ever-growing ramifications.

During my recent visit I learned that the lives of important Jewish figures who are speaking out against Israel's barbarous repression of the Palestinians are being threatened, and sometimes attacked, by self-proclaimed zealots. Death-threats are now a pervasive feature of life for some prominent Israeli Jews with the authorities doing little even though in some cases they know where the threats are coming from. Meanwhile, in the Palestinian areas, reports of "death-squads" targeting leaders of the *Intifada* have become more common though they are very difficult to prove conclusively.

There's much more than needs to be said, of-course. The Israelis are growing quite desperate to put out the *Intifada* one way or another, and more and more the subject of expulsion (euphemistically now known as "transfer") is being discussed. The Palestinians are becoming more and more hardened and determined. All the while, the *Intifada* is being forced further underground; and indeed it is likely that it will soon be moving the *Intifada* "across" the Green Line into Israel itself.

We are all witness to a major tragedy in the making in Palestine. The moderate centre is increasingly becoming weakened and discredited. Among those I saw, I visited with long-time friend and political dove, now Deputy Finance Minister, Yossi Beilin. And though I found him still willing to fight I also got the impression that he and his colleagues were increasingly weakened and depressed by the ongoing political battles. And in an interview with former member of the army general staff, General Matti Peled—to be published in a few weeks—Peled calmly predicted the possible use of Israeli nuclear weapons against Damascus and other Arab cities.

So there is little doubt that Israel's "disorientation" is growing and that the *Intifada* is the major factor causing the Israelis to loose their balance. But we should all be increasingly worried that the heirs of the holocaust, now themselves accused of different forms of war crimes from within their own ranks as well as from without, may see the Biblical parable of Samson bringing down the whole temple as their fate; however irrational such a means of salvation.

tious transplant to Jews.

As I left Israel a few days ago, American embassy personnel confirmed to me that they were outraged; that they had been denied, for some weeks, even the right to see a Palestinian American who had been taken into custody. And a few weeks before that the relatives of another young Palestinian American who had been told by military occupation authorities he was in custody were shocked when the boy's body was found in the fields and the authorities then denied they knew anything about him!

Scandal, cover-up, and official lying appear to have become endemic in today's Israel. And the growing pressures of the Intifada, it seems to me, have greatly exacerbated an already serious and increasingly unstable situation.

In my personal case as I tried to fly back to the United States, Israeli security officials repeatedly demanded to know the

detailed and when American journalists began calling the embassy and Israeli security officials at the airport, the Israelis—true to character I'm said to have to conclude—planted disinformation in some Israeli newspapers in order to cover their misdeeds.

The tale they told of course bore little resemblance to the truth. But then it is but one more episode of lies and distortions for which Israel is sadly becoming known worldwide.

Furthermore, the corrupting atmosphere of "we can do whatever we want" seems so pervasive now that even consistency is omitted. For instance what Israeli officials told *Haaretz* newspaper was inconsistent with what they told the American embassy ("He wouldn't open his suitcases and so we couldn't pass him through security") as well as with what they told the *Boston Globe* correspondent ("He wouldn't let us see his passport and ticket). On and on.

What is most important, it seems to me, is that elements of a totalitarian state mentality and style are becoming more and more pervasive not just in regard to Israel's actions in the occupied territories, but within Israeli society itself.

As one day young Israelis are told to shoot and beat Palestinians in the territories and the next they are expected to deal with travellers at a major international airport, it shouldn't be so surprising that the young generation of Israelis is increasingly confused about standards of behaviour. In short the price of the *Intifada* is growing for Israelis and being felt in a great variety of ways.

What is being done to Palestinians is of course outrageous and unconscionable. But that's another subject—one which I've written about often. This whole *weltenschang*—this whole style of intimidation, lying, cover-up, and violence—is seeping into every day Israeli life which on the

Many examples of this pattern can be pointed to.

Shortly after the Intifida began—and with Henry Kissinger's blessing—the Israelis began making considerable efforts to intimidate the press and to prevent pictures of Israeli brutality from reaching television screens around the world. Just recently they have taken steps to control and monitor the movements of Palestinians and vehicles from the territories. Electronic monitoring of phone calls and faxes has been greatly stepped up in recent months along with enhanced computerised methods of information gathering and tax collections. Indeed just a few days ago fax machines were outlawed in occupied Gaza and are likely to be controlled soon throughout the occupied territories.

Furthermore, persons such as Abdeen Jabara, President of the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, have been barred from visiting Israel;

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Will exodus make Germany one?

By Deborah Zabarenko

THE picture of jubilant East German refugees clutching fresh West German passports brings an old US policy question to the surface: Will Germany ever become one again?

Most US analysts doubt reunification could take place this century but they say it could happen during the lifetimes of the East German emigrants who have made a mass westward exodus through Hungary and Austria in the past ten days.

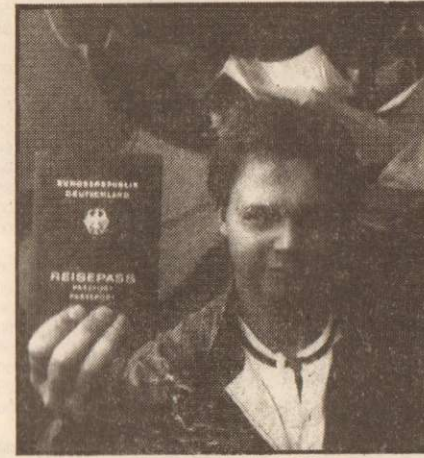
Created out of the rubble of World War Two, West Germany has long had the goal of reunification with the East. But the goal is stated cautiously by the Bonn government and by the United States, which shares it.

The most outspoken American advocate of German reunification—known in US policy circles as self-determination—may be Vernon Walters, the US ambassador in Bonn, who said in a radio interview on September 3, "it is not normal with two Germanys."

Walters said President George Bush would favour reunification "if it were to be achieved peacefully and through free elections by the population."

Bush told reporters on Monday, "I would think it's a matter for the Germans to decide. But put it this way: if that was worked out between the Germanys, I do not think we should view that as bad for Western interests. I think there's been a dramatic change in post-World War Two Germany. And so I don't fear it."

Washington analysts are more circumspect. "Our position on reunification is nothing we trumpet from the rooftops," one said.



A refugee with his valid West German passport.

"Nobody thinks it'll be tomorrow or next year," said a State Department official who declined to be identified. "Historically there is always this kind of feeling about Germany, after the two world wars: 'keep an eye on them.' I'm sure that's how a lot of Europeans feel."

Jeremiah Riemer, an expert on East-West relations at Johns Hopkins University, said he did not believe a single German state was possible this century.

"I do think that some form of closer association between West Germany and an East Germany which is greatly reformed, much more open, is possible," Riemer said. "I don't think people want to think about it except one step at a time."

A first step, one that is already being contemplated, would be along the path of economic reform being charted by the plan-

ned economic unification of Western Europe in 1992, the Brookings Institution's John Steinbruner said.

He said West Germany may press for stronger East German trade ties to Western Europe.

The key question, one analyst said, was not whether reunification could occur but in what context an economically and politically massive united Germany would exist.

The analyst said a cohesive Europe could more readily cope with the new entity but a united Germany would be hard to accept as long as Eastern Europe is "fundamentally in disarray."

Despite the basic West German law that urges reunification, "Germans are conservative people. The last thing they want to do is leap into an unknown void that would put at risk everything they've worked for."

The US endorsement of reunification has three important conditions, the analyst said: It must come "in peace, in freedom and integrated within the democratic community of nations of Europe."

The United States has a role to play in easing the road to German reunification, according to Burton Pines, Vice President of the Conservative Heritage Foundation.

"It's going to be a big problem for Europe, which is why the United States has to try and take a lead in this and find the kind of arrangement in which a unified Germany is least threatening to its neighbours," Pines said.

This might include a security arrangement whereby the United States would guarantee US involvement in the event that East Germany "misbehaves," he said. Reuter