

HOLIDAY PULLOUT: SHOPPING IN TINSELTOWN

L.A. WEEKLY

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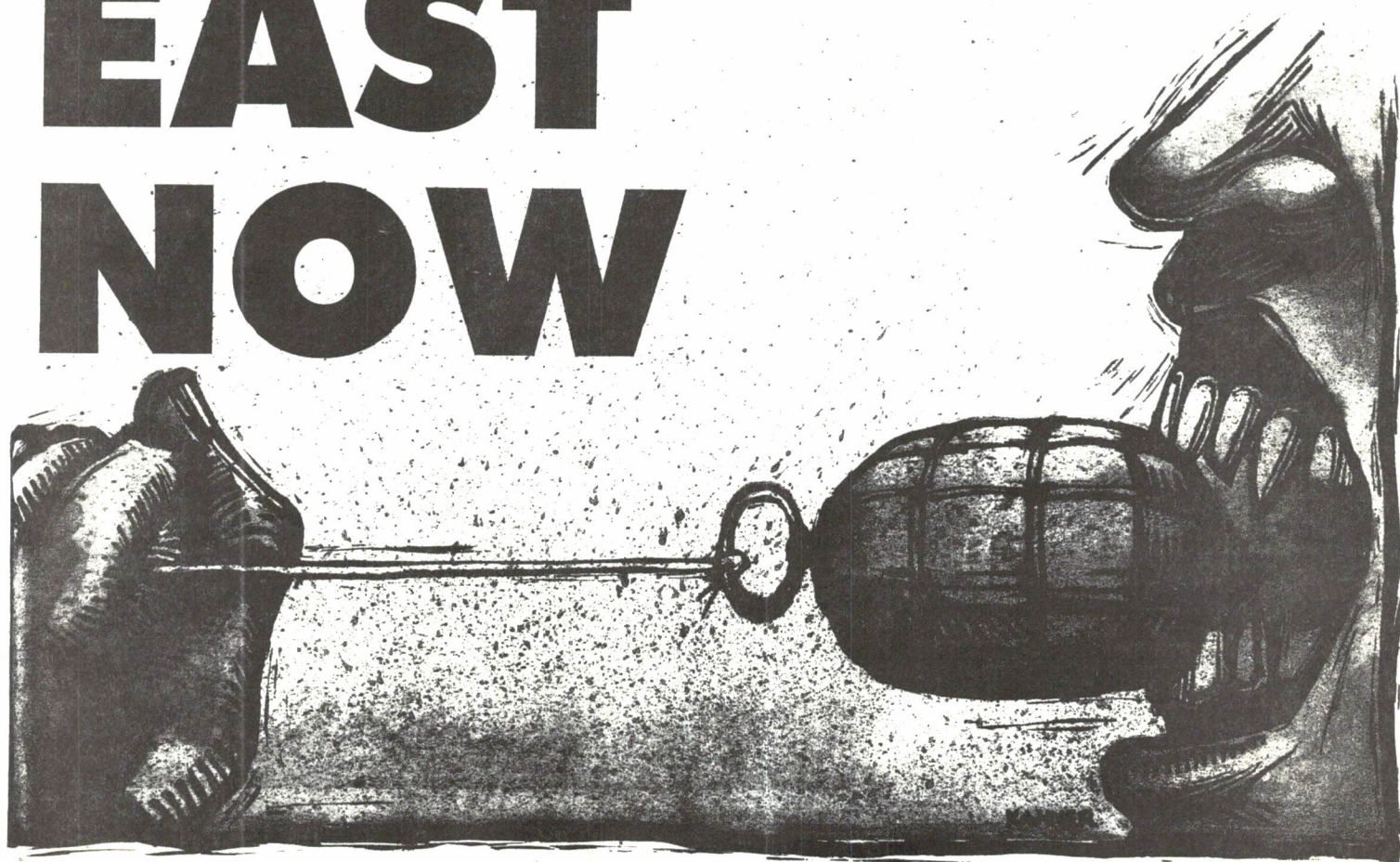
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December 19-25, 1986 Vol. 9 No. 4

SPECIAL ISSUE

THE MIDDLE EAST NOW



L.A. WEEKLY

FEATURES

L.A. Weekly Special Issue: The Middle East Now

Edited by Eric Mankin and Michel
Bogopolsky
begins on page 8

Background to Bloodletting 9	Yearning for Judgment Day 45
by George Irani	by Diane James
Camp David Revisited 9	Living With Jihad 45
by Mark A. Bruzonsky	by Mohammed Hamadeh
Nuclear Balkans? 18	Peace Initiatives 58
by Joe Stark	by Rachel Eytan, Muna Hamzeh and Helene Rosenbluth
Israel's A-Bombs 18	Terrorism Hypocrisy 66
by Amos Wollin	by Noam Chomsky
Who's Who 22	PLO Documentaries 69
by Michel Bogopolsky	by Joan Mandell
Lebanon Remembered 28	
by Michel Bogopolsky	
The PLO 34	
by Ibrahim Abu Lughod	
Behind the Iron Scandal 38	
by Eric Mankin and Michel Bogopolsky	
Israel's Klansmen 44	
by Celeste Fremon	

ON THE COVER:
Illustration by Catherine Kanner.

Because of the holiday, next week's issue, number 5, will be available on Wed., Dec. 24, a day earlier than usual. Issue 6 (dated Jan. 2) will be available on Wed., Dec. 31 — so that *Weekly* staffers can spend National Hangover Day in sober contemplation.

DEPARTMENTS

ashes and diamonds	classifieds	129
Deep trouble. 4	comics	
by Alexander Cockburn	Ernie Pook's Comeek	133
good times 70	by Lynda J. Barry	
bulletin board 71	Komix Page	142
calendar 72	astrology	141
poetry		
Angelino Landscape 128		
by Ricardo Ventura		

PULL-OUT

Shopping Tinseltown X-1	on the streets	
names & faces	Vertigo. X-37	
Tim Street-Porter, Chess Brodnick, X-33	by Gloria Ohland	
Scott Dmavich	health	
edited by Gloria Ohland	Fish oil. X-39	
music	by Carolyn Reuben	
L.A. Dee Da X-34	restaurants	
by Kim Jones	Le Bouvier's Saloon. X-41	
fashion in the stores	by Karen Kaplan	
Caf-Fiends. X-36	travel	
by Gloria Ohland	Get Away X-54	

"The Middle East." At this point in our history, the very words seem to connote something almost beyond understanding, full of frustration and even despair: Lebanon is in perpetual chaos; the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is irremediable; Iran and Iraq are engaged in a kind of ritual suicide nurtured on dictatorship and fanaticism.

If all the above were true, there would be no reason to look any further. But the truth is more complex than that, and a lot closer to home — two good reasons for the *Weekly* to put out an issue like the one you are holding.

Here are some alternate premises:

- If Lebanon *is* in chaos, it has not always been so. There are reasons why the streets of Beirut have been a war zone for nearly 11 years.

- The Israeli-Palestinian dispute is profound and intractable, but it is neither beyond healing, nor (the most important point of all) is it beyond our power to influence.

- The case of the Iran-Iraq war is a perfect example of this all-important (for us) point. We (Americans/taxpayers/voters) are deeply enmeshed in the history, past and future, of the Middle East. If this was ever in doubt, the revelations of the last few weeks should have put those doubts to rest.

What is this week's issue *not*? It is not a definitive statement of the problem, much less of the solution. (If such a statement exists, it remains a well-kept secret.) And it is not a blow-by-blow account of 40 (or 10, or 80) years of provocation and counterprovocation. Such accounts are already available, in several competing versions.

We have tried, as far as possible, to avoid a litany of horrors and misdeeds. What we *have* tried to do is provide a mixture of viewpoints not generally heard in the American press, reflections by human beings caught up in one of the great maelstroms of our time, and thus provide representative analyses of some of the major Middle Eastern events and policies.

—The Editors

The L.A. Weekly (USPS #461370) is located at 2140 Hyperion Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90027. (213) 667-2620; Display Advertising (213) 667-2511. Published weekly. Subscription price \$18.50 for six months; \$35.00 per year. Second class postage paid at Los Angeles. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to L.A. Weekly at 2140 Hyperion Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90027. Submissions of all kinds are welcomed. Address to the editor and include a self-addressed stamped envelope. Copyright 1986, Los Angeles Weekly, Inc. All rights reserved. The L.A. Weekly is a legal adjudicated newspaper published every Thursday / judgment of the Los Angeles Superior Court entered February 25, 1981, Case no. C 347 808, Book no. 7698, Page no. 69. ■

Camp David Revisited

Peace Process? What Peace Process?

By Mark A. Bruzonsky

Stephen Green, writing in *The Nation* last September, said correctly that "in 1986, Israel need not worry about an invasion. The situation is more serious than that. The potential exists, or soon will exist, for a missile exchange that could reduce many Middle Eastern cities to smoking rubble in a matter of hours, and in the process draw the United States and the Soviet Union into the conflict."

What is the United States doing about this? Not much. Until Reagan took office, few international dilemmas had so continuously occupied U.S. diplomacy as the Arab-Israeli conflict. After the 1956 war, President Eisenhower demanded that Israel withdraw from the Sinai, threatening a cut-off of aid and an end to the tax-

exempt status of Israeli bonds. After the Six Day War in 1967, there was U.N. Resolution 242, calling for Israeli withdrawal and negotiated treaties. In '69 it was the Rogers Plan, in '73 the Geneva Conference, in '75 the U.S. "Reassessment," in '77 the Joint U.S.-Soviet Statement, in '78 the Camp David Accords, and in 1980 the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, signed on the White House lawn.

By contrast, in the Reagan years Israel has lashed out at three Arab capitals, actually invading one (Beirut) in 1982. Israeli arms and advisers have greatly escalated their operations in Africa and Latin American in coordination with Washington's policies, allowing Israel to pursue a sustained effort at enforcing acceptance of the American-Israeli *diktat*.

Almost 10 years ago, I sat alone with Anwar Sadat as he made up his mind about how to change an ominous future. A few days later, he emerged onto the tarmac in Israel. Many who were there at the time, including myself, had an almost religious experience in believing that men of courage and vision could somehow triumph over the forces of hatred and destruction.

But Sadat's vision took root in the politics of neither Israel nor the U.S. His unprecedented gambit was followed by more than a year of wrangling and discord that led to Camp David, and then by another year of bickering before the White House ceremony with Jimmy Carter standing between them, literally bringing the hands of Sadat and Begin together in an uneasy truce.



Anwar Sadat: Left in the lurch by the Americans and the Israelis?

Yet the much-discussed "linkage" between the "separate peace" and the Palestinian issue never came about, even though President Carter had given his personal promise at Camp David to keep Sadat from leaving the conference, assuring him that he would "make things right" in his second term.

What has followed can hardly be called peace. Israel first annexed East Jerusalem,

then the Golan Heights, all the while continuing to build new settlements on the West Bank (despite language in the Camp David accord calling for "withdrawal of the Israeli civil and military administration" to allow the Palestinians to begin to exercise "full autonomy" in the area). In June 1980, just days after a Begin-Sadat meeting, Israel attacked the nuclear reactor

continued on page 14

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Bruzonsky *continued from page 9*

in Baghdad, greatly embarrassing Sadat. A month later, Israeli war planes attacked Beirut, killing 300. By the year's end, an isolated and discredited Anwar Sadat had been assassinated by his own military, and Egypt hardly mourned him as three former American presidents escorted his coffin through the heavily secured streets of Cairo.

Less than two years later, as the United States looked approvingly on, Israel invaded Lebanon. The summerlong seige of Beirut that followed left a deep scar in the Arab world, and created such tension in Egypt that President Mubarak faced rebellion within his own government for refusing to do more than withdraw his ambassador from Tel Aviv.

The promises of a comprehensive peace as enunciated by Jimmy Carter were disowned by the Reagan administration . . . No longer was finding a homeland for the Palestinian a part of U.S. policy, not even publicly.

More generally, the promises of a comprehensive peace as enunciated by Jimmy Carter were disowned by the Reagan administration. No longer was Israeli settlement in the occupied territories condemned, as it had been before. No longer was finding a homeland for the Palestinian a part of U.S. policy, not even publicly. "Even-handedness" had ceased to be credible, even as a slogan.

Rather, the new American administration quickly moved toward a "strategic alliance" with Israel, consulting on the occupation of Lebanon, even opening a new era in U.S. Middle East policy when American naval guns opened fire on Lebanese villages in the hills above Beirut. It was the first — but not the last — use of American military might against Arab targets, and brought about a wave of retaliation that has still not subsided, though the immediate effects were apparent enough when car bombs destroyed both the American Embassy and the U.S. Marine compound.

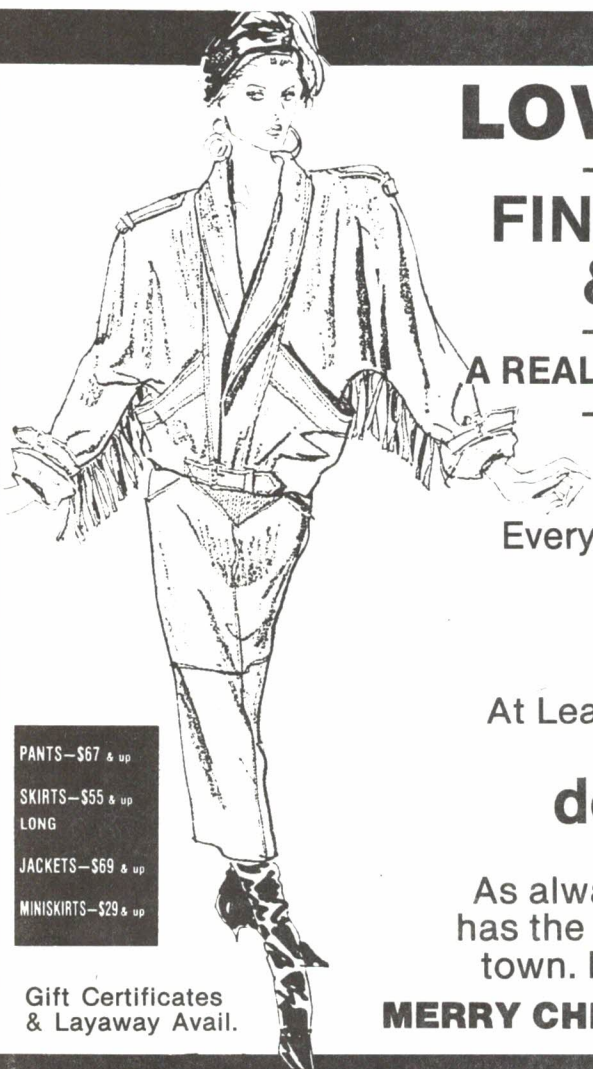
The bombings of Baghdad, Tunis and Tripoli, the invasion of Lebanon, the aborted deployment of American Marines, the opening phases of a still-looming major war with Syria, the spreading of American covert operations throughout the region — all of this has more than ever before cast America in the role of villain. No wonder Americans feel unsafe; they have been targeted by the Arab world in an expression of outrage against their nation's policies.

No further marginal fixes are likely to change this course. No more cheap American rhetoric, usually contradicted by its actions, is likely to be considered credible. ■

Mark Bruzonsky was, from 1977 to 1983, Washington associate of the World Jewish Congress and covered Sadat's visit to Israel and the peace process negotiations for several publications. He is also co-editor of the forthcoming book Security in the Middle East.

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TALKING PEACE



Israeli: No More Vengeance

By Rachel Eytan

In 1947 an Egyptian pilot bombed my house on Ben Yehuda Street in northern Tel Aviv. He had been sent by King Farouk. My aunt died on the roof. I was saved through a miracle and became a refugee without a home.

Although, in the twisted logic of the Middle East, the incident earned me the right to seek unending vengeance against my attackers, it equally well entitles me, as well as many other Israelis, to pursue peace.

Since then, Israel has undergone another five terrible wars. The government, the

maps, the Israeli and the Palestinian people have all changed. One thing, however, has not changed: the unfortunate, tragic relations between us and the Palestinian Arabs. More and more lately, I've been meeting people who are profoundly disappointed in Israel, which, they say, has not lived up to the vision of "beautiful Israel" — the land of humanism, social rebirth and the granting of dignity and human rights to all regardless of race, religion or sex — expounded by the founding fathers.

Since the 1967 war, they claim, Israel has turned into a mini-empire, an oppressor of another people, and is rapidly boiling over

with chauvinistic religious fundamentalism, sinking toward an end to democracy and individual rights.

What happened to that other Israel, the modern, idealistic state, the only democracy in the Middle East? How did the soul of Israel — with its aspirations toward social justice and enlightenment in

the spirit of the prophets — disappear? What happened to the prophecy of rebirth?

Many of those who are now asking questions like these, whether in the United States, in Europe or in Israel itself, lived in 1967 in a state of euphoria. Many of them — perhaps also because of residual trauma



Rachel Eytan: an end to vendetta?

Palestinian: My Peace Affair

By Muna Hamzeh

The Arabs, unfortunately, are not masters of the game of public relations. If they were, they might have won over Israeli public opinion a long time ago. For the Israelis, it seems to me, have a strong need to be recognized not by Americans, Germans or Haitians, but by the Arabs they have been in a position to subjugate.

I learned this by visiting "the enemy" last year. I was 8 years old in 1967 when Israel occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. That means it has been 19 years since I was denied the right to live in the country where I was born. Jerusalem is my hometown, but I

can't live there, or even go there, without an Israeli nod. (An American Jew from Nevada or Minnesota can get on a plane to Jerusalem anytime.) But last year, for the first time since I was a little girl, I went to visit my country and the city where I was born.

I was granted special permission to visit Jerusalem in December 1985. It was to be my first trip back in 15 years. My fiancé, an American Jew, obtained a special permit from the government: Instead of entering Israel through Jordan — as is required of all Jordanian citizens, whether or not they're of Palestinian descent — I was allowed to fly directly from the U.S. to Tel Aviv. I was also given a "safe-conduct"



Muna Hamzeh on Israeli TV.

pass, written on official Israeli government stationery, which told "whom it may concern" that I was not to be harmed or harassed.

The safe conduct had been my condition. I was not about to land in "enemy territory" without having sufficient protection. I missed Jerusalem, but not enough to risk interrogation and, perhaps, torture at the hands of the Israelis. [Editor's note: There have been two recent cases of

Americans of Palestinian descent being arrested, imprisoned and severely abused by Israeli authorities. Non-American Palestinians are routinely detained, as are West Bank and Gaza Strip residents.]

One week after arriving in Israel, I was asked to appear on *Ze Hazman*, a weekly talk show on Israeli TV. It seemed to me that I did not make any remarkable political statements on television, nor did I

continued on page 63

The View From Nairobi

By Helene Rosenbluth

Fawzia stood in front of a packed roomful of women from all over the world, telling of the strip searches she must endure every time she passes the bridge between Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank. She was born in a refugee camp in 1948, and knows firsthand the hardships that come with being a Palestinian under occupation.

Galia works with a Zionist peace organization that has called upon the Israeli government to seek a solution with the

Palestinians involving partition and self-determination for both peoples. She pleaded with Fawzia to talk to the PLO leadership: "Your extremists on one side are feeding our extremists on the other! This cycle of war and terror and hatred has to be broken!"

"We are the victims of superpower politics," a woman from Lebanon shouted from the back of the room. "We must start to develop our common ground here as women . . ."

In Nairobi, a blue-and-white-striped big

top became known as "the Peace Tent" to the 15,000 women who came there from 126 nations in 1985. It turned into a haven where women from countries locked in bitter conflict could meet and try to surmount the barriers to peace.

Throughout the U.N.-declared Decade for Women, which began in 1975, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict often marred any hope of true progress. In Mexico City in 1975, any public statement equating Zionism with racism created a turmoil.

continued on page 65

offer any formulas for peace. All I said was that I had gone through a process of learning to understand and humanize the enemy, that I believe there must be a Palestinian state, and that the Jews have a right to a homeland in the Middle East as well.

Much to my surprise, within 24 hours of the interview, I was the hottest story in Israel. Everyone knew who I was. (Israel is a one-TV-station country.) Israeli soldiers in Bethlehem would wave and smile at me instead of asking for my identification papers. I was stopped in the local markets by Palestinian and Israeli workers who wanted to discuss co-existence and peace. What I thought was going to be a quiet visit to Jerusalem turned into a major media event. Many Israelis wanted to meet "the nice Palestinian from America who recognizes the Jews."

Which is why I say the Arabs don't know how to play the game of public relations. The Israelis were so deliriously hungry for acceptance, they were completely enchanted by an unknown and unimportant woman who told them, nicely and without realizing it, exactly what they wanted to hear.

The official Arab position, of course, is that full recognition of Israel would finally legitimize Israel's occupation of Arab land, making the Jewish state an accepted part of the Middle East, and that such recognition is unthinkable because it would totally shatter the whole construct of anti-Zionism and the Arab struggle against Israeli expansionism. But what would happen if Israel were recognized, if a real peace were proposed in exchange for territorial withdrawal and the creation of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip? After all, if the Arab world accepted Israel, isn't it likely that 120 million Arabs would have a greater influence on 3 million Israelis than vice versa?

But the notion that Israelis might someday shop in Damascus, vacation in Tunis and dine in Kuwait — as they do now in Egypt — is deeply troubling, both to some Arabs and to some Israelis.

The Israeli schizophrenia about real peace should not be overlooked. After all, the whole idea behind Israel was to have a national homeland where Jews can be Jews — not Canadians or Bulgarians or Moroccans or Ethiopians, but Jews. If the Israelis were to become accepted and eventually assimilated into the Arab world, wouldn't that destroy the purpose for which the state was originally created?

For their part, the Arab leaders may likewise not want the Israelis to be fully assimilated into their culture, bringing in Israeli social values, marrying Arabs, influencing the Arab way of life. What if an Israeli were to marry a Saudi princess? What if a prominent Israeli activist decided to fight for Arab civil rights or — unthinkable — call for equal rights for women? No, the current Arab leadership would not be able to handle that. They are not likely to be enthusiastic about their subjects discovering that there is an alternative to totalitarian rule. (The Arab-Israeli conflict may be unique, but it is by no means the only conflict in the Middle East.)

Lost in all this tugging are the true hopes for peace between the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. They are the ones who ultimately must co-exist together, if they can ever reach that point. Arafat may someday sign a peace agreement with an

Israeli leader, but it will be Palestinians like me who will have to live in harmony with the Israelis. And the longer the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land continues, the more difficult it will be for people on both sides to peel away the layers of animosity and bitterness that have multiplied over the years.

In the end, what shocked and disappointed me most about the Israelis is how they simply ignore the people whose lands they occupy. Even the most sincere Israelis I know, with very few exceptions, have never set foot in a Palestinian refugee camp in Gaza. They preach co-existence, but they have no idea what the people they intend to co-exist with are like. They do not want to admit that Israeli occupation policies are brutal and inhumane, despite the evidence right under their noses. Though, to give credit where credit is due, the Israelis do act when their moral sense is aroused. When hundreds of Palestinians were massacred in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in September 1982, 400,000 Israelis demonstrated in the streets of Tel Aviv to protest their government's involvement.)

Still, I will never forget the five Israeli generals I met at a private party in a Tel Aviv suburb on my last night in Israel. I was the only Palestinian at the party. The Israelis asked me to make a few comments and answer a few questions. I told them that what we needed, as individuals, was to personalize the enemy and work on ridding ourselves of our stereotypes of one another. I suggested they visit the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and meet with the Palestinians there. I told them that if they were sincere about co-existence, they must be vocal in their support of a Palestinian homeland.

To my great dismay, the generals ignored these points and instead asked me a string of very specific political questions. I told them I was not Arafat, not the PLO, and not a policy-maker. I did not have the answers to their questions. My words fell on deaf ears, and I was angry. The generals were treating me as though I were a Palestinian spokesman, and I wasn't. Their questions to me suddenly made them start arguing among themselves. I found myself, the Palestinian, sitting quietly in the corner while the Israelis fought among themselves.

So here I am, approaching 1987 and another year without the Palestinian citizenship I so long for. Do I think I will ever obtain it? Yes, I strongly believe that, and it is the existence of Israel that makes my belief so strong. The Jews waited 2,000 years to fulfill their dream of return; they have given me faith in perseverance. The images of Jerusalem will forever be engraved in my heart and mind. I will engrave them in the hearts and minds of my half-Jewish children, who will, I hope, carry on the torch of Palestine. If they don't, at least I will die knowing that my grandchildren will be born, and that among their first spoken words will be "Jerusalem" and "Palestine."

I fear, though, that the words "peace" and "justice" may be lost along the way. And I feel that Israeli chauvinism and imperialism, coupled with Arab insecurity and ineptitude, could lead to disaster for Israelis and Palestinians alike. ■

Muna Hamzeh is a freelance journalist working in Washington, D.C. She was born in Jerusalem and grew up in Amman, Jordan. Her father was for several years a member of the PLO.