

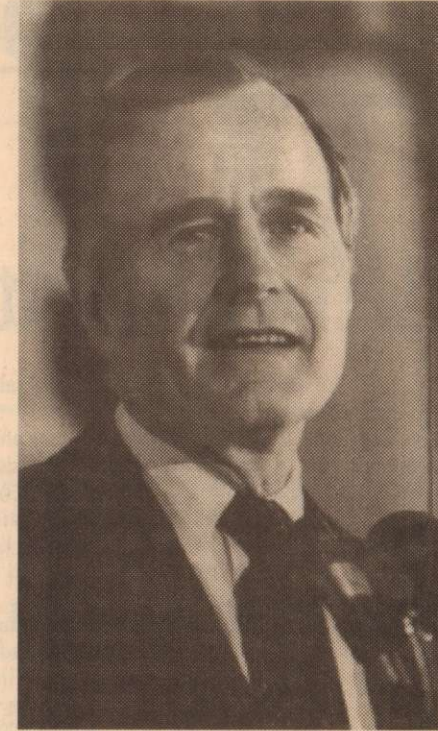
INTERVIEW WITH FAISAL AL-HUSSEINI

By Mark A. Bruzonsky

Without PLO 'the game will not go on'



Yasser Arafat



George Bush

8-day peace talks

Tension, uncertainty haunt Salvador

By Martin Langfield

TENSIONS from the past and uncertainty about the future haunt El Salvador as government and leftist rebel negotiators met in Venezuela yesterday for peace talks aimed at ending 11 years of bloody civil war.

The United Nations-sponsored talks, scheduled to last eight days, are unlikely to lead to a ceasefire in the conflict, which has claimed 75,000 lives, diplomats and analysts say.

Envoys of the US-backed government and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) will nevertheless seek to advance on the main sticking points of the 13-month old talks, including the future of the powerful armed forces and the eventual terms of a ceasefire, they add.

"On these two great themes there has already been a great deal of consensus...it's not that the greater part remains to be agreed but rather the lesser part," President Alfredo Cristiani said in a televised address to the nation this week.

FMLN leaders speaking in Mexico and Nicaragua were less sanguine, however, saying a cease-fire by May 31 -- a deadline they themselves proposed two months ago -- was now impossible and that their forces will not lay down their arms unless the military disarm at the same time.

Accusations

As tension mounts between the two sides, with each accusing the other of going back on accords signed last month in talks in Mexico, the war meanwhile continues.

The military said four rebels and three soldiers died on Thursday in fighting in the north, centre and east of the country, while a total of 22 people, including three civil-

Gazette today carries the second part of the detailed discussion. In the first part part Faisal Al-Husseini said that the Palestinians are strong enough to paralyse any solution that would not take their interests into consideration. In this concluding part he says that each party to the proposed peace conference has its own agenda. He insists that the Israelis certainly 'aren't going to discuss the Palestinian State.'



US Secretary of State James Baker (left) with Faisal Al-Husseini in the occupied Jerusalem during his fourth shttule visit to Mid-east.—AP

What will happen when we reach difficulties? If the Israeli delegation will say I must go back to my government. The American delegation will say I must go and discuss it with Mr. Baker. Where am I going to go? Can you tell me Mr. Baker? Do you have answer for this question?

■Well, I have another suggestion...

●When we are talking about this I am putting these questions not because I agree to go there, but to prove to you that...

So the answer is starting to search for a way that I can go and discuss it with the PLO. I put another question. You [Mr. Baker] are talking about something that I will have less than government, less than State, more than autonomy. This thing that you are talking about is it authorised to give the right of return for Palestinians from Kuwait?

■Please, tell me what his answer is to this one.

●The answer: "Excellent question, can anyone help me?"

■So, Mt. Ross than says... [Note: Dennis Ross is head off the State Department's Policy Planning Staff and frequently accompanies Mr. Baker to such meetings].

●Resolution 194 is solving this problem. He [Mr. Baker] then says: "Excellent question, excellent answer." But I said then no, 194 is talking about the right of return of the Palestinians to Is-

perience the Palestinian experience.

How much time do you have? You can't have two years "dialogue" in Tunis; now two years dialogue with Faisal Hussein, then the next President will come and have dialogues with someone else...

●Maybe it will not take such a long time. Maybe we can to come to a conclusion, to a result. When this time when Mr. Shamir will say "No" maybe Mr. Baker will not say "here is more phone number."

■You think a confrontation can be created between the US, Israel, if If can just use blunt words.

●I believe there must be a sort of confrontation because if there will be no confrontation so it means for everyone that there is no new system in this world, no new order, that we are still there in the same jungle. And if the name of the game is not international legitimacy, if the name of the game is no new world order, if the name of the game is the jungle, then I will say to Mr. Baker "excuse me, but I must send another player."

■But look at the timing? We are almost in mid-1991. In a few months we go into the American election; cycle. You know how American politicians are. One after the other they're going to talk about Saddam Hussein, and Yasser Arafat, and they're going

number but I am sure if you are not going to do something in the next year you will not be even interested in calling my phone number."

■What do you mean by that? Next year what?

●He must sit with someone else.

■Who? You said earlier that there wasn't anyone else.

●Someone with a bigger beard?

■A bigger board? Much bigger?

●Yes, much bigger ... Maybe.

■Those people don't want to sit with Baker, the don't want to even sit with guys like me!

●When they will feel their importance, they will meet. No one in this world is not ready to meet with the other side. No one. Only I can meet with him with the other side, in one of two cases: when I feel that I am strong enough to talk to him, or when he will force me to come to talk with him when my hands are tied behind my back. And now, we believe that we are strong enough to meet with them, with the Israelis, with Baker, and to talk and to negotiate and to give and to have.

■If you are strong enough to meet with Baker, why aren't you also strong enough to welcome him to your country when he comes, to hold a meeting, maybe two meetings, and then to say in front of a press conference something like this: "The Palesti-

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

■Yes, the world has changed. The Americans are the only superpowers.

But the Americans are largely, in Washington, controlled by forces antagonistic to the Palestinians. So whatever James Baker says to you the reality is that if he comes home and tries to do certain things he is likely to be forced not to. The Congress is completely dominated by the Israeli lobby...everybody knows these things.

●OK, I think I can explain to you about this. At a certain moment the United States is going to think like they thought in Camp David...that they can overcome the leadership of the PLO in Tunis. Now they must do two things to come with such a plan. They must overcome or neglect those in Tunis and also the people here. And the people here also are appointed by the PLO; they are part of the beginning of any game. And without us the game will not go on.

■What if Baker comes to you sometime in the future -- you've met him now many times and have some rapport with him -- what if he comes to you and says: "All right. We've arranged a regional conference. Not an international conference; not the old what we were discussing with UN resolutions but something new, a regional conference. And you've always told me that the

You've always told me that the PLO has designated you and the other Palestinians here as representatives and that you take your directions from the PLO. And now we need you to come to this conference. You know the Israelis won't come if official PLO people come. So we need you to come and get this conference started.

It seems to me it would be very difficult for you to say no.

●What are we going to discuss there?

■Each party has its own agenda. The Israelis certainly aren't going to discuss a Palestinian State!

●What you are talking about, this is what we discussed in the first meeting [with Baker]. And the answer was, OK, what do you have?

■And he doesn't have very much, does he?

●No, not yet very much. But given time, he is trying to come with... Everytime he tries to come with something different, with something new, which we are not ready to accept.

■How do you think he has done; he's been very busy? What kind of progress do you think he's made.

●If in the first meeting the atmosphere was that the Americans are trying to find a way how to get rid of the PLO, but I can say that the other two meetings were about how to increase the PLO without angering Israel.

■I have some experience with the Israelis. They are pretty sophisticated and pretty careful. I don't think they are going to be tricked into negotiating with the PLO... We all know the issue isn't the PLO anyway, the issue is what's going to be negotiated at the table. The Israelis don't want to negotiate a Palestinian state, so they don't want to acknowledge a Palestinian nation, so they don't want to negotiate with the PLO.

●If there will be a Palestinian delegation from the occupied territories... OK, I will go tomorrow in a delegation tomorrow to Washington or to Cairo as the representative of local Palestinians in the occupied territories and we will start discussing.

rael; I am talking about the right or of return to Palestine. The right of return to Israel is there; and we are ready to negotiate about the implementation, not the right. How, to implement this right? — compensation; return back; how many; how; when? This is what means the right of return in 194 resolution. But the right of return for the Palestinians from Kuwait and Lebanon and other parts, it is non-negotiable. It is a right, and I would like to know if this creation you are calling less than state has this right or not.

■And I bet they said they'd have to think about that.

●Yes.

■They're only been thinking for 20 years. I hear that you are saying, and I understand what you are saying, but doesn't this all seem like political theatrics?

The Israelis are nowhere near being willing to agree to a Palestinian State. They are nowhere near. And the American government is nowhere near forcing them to do so.

So what's going on, it seems to me, is that we've just had this terrible war, and George Bush is embarrassed celebrating this war while the Kurds are suffering and dying, and Bush told the Arab regimes that after the war he would seriously do something about the tensions in the region — one of the biggest tensions being the political cancer of the Palestinian problems.

And the Americans don't want to be perceived historically as an imperialist power. They want to be perceived as the power that is trying to bring peace and democracy and justice. And yet on the very day Baker goes to Kuwait to discuss democracy the opposition groups have the lights turned off on them in the hotel and aren't even allowed to hold their press conference.

So, hasn't the whole situation become so hypocritical. So isn't what's really going on

now political theatrics because we're nowhere near a settlement. And isn't it very important to them in this context that you meet with them. And don't you think Baker gets the better part of the bargain because he gets to get his picture taken with you everytime he comes here, and then he gets to say, right or wrong, that the Americans are a fair intermediary, we're negotiating with all parties and the Americans should be treated as a fair party honestly trying to bring peace to the region — even when this isn't true.

●You can bluff part of the people all the time. You can bluff part of the time all the people. But you can't bluff all the people all the time.

■The Americans are pretty good at it though...

●If he has one plus because he is sitting beside me, I will have one plus because I am sitting beside him. If he will say: "Look, I am sitting with this Palestinian." So this person became a little bigger than before. So if he will say that I will accept something and I am not ready to accept it I will say to him "no." After all of this propaganda, my "no" is stronger than my no before I was sitting with him.

■In other words these meetings give you credibility as well as him. And credibility that you

can use at an appropriate time.

●And this "no" of me will be more strong after the third meeting than after the first or without any meeting.

■OK, this is true. I mean this is international diplomacy.

But back to the key issue. I know it's difficult; but I really would like you to just try to give as candid an answer as you can.

My impression is that we are only in the opening phases of a very long and tortuous negotiation. There's no settlement likely to come soon. All kinds of things are going to happen. We're nowhere near a real peace conference. But the political theatrics of all this have to be gone through because of what's happened in the region. Would you agree?

●I can say like this. Nothing, long or short, can start without us. Nothing, long or short, can end without us.

■But if I were the Israelis I would respond by saying to myself that every year we can delay this we put more settlers, we build more roads, we take more lands, we demoralise more Palestinians. If I were on the other side I would go watch "Dancing With The Wolves" [Notes: the popular Kevin Costner movie that was playing in the occupied Jerusalem but which no Palestinian I met had seen, including Hussein] and I would see in the Indian ex-

talk about this and that. Even a honest President, even an administration like the Carter one that really wanted to do something honestly....

I mean the people in this administration...sure they send you the nice guys to talk to you. They send you Mr. Baker and he smiles and talks to you, and then send you Mr. Ross. But Larry Eagleburger is their top political official in the State Department and he's been working with the Israelis and the Jewish lobby for years and years -- and the same with Brent Scowcroft at the NSC. These Kissinger people are very strong in Washington.

The Bush administration is really the continuation of the Reagan administration which was the best ever for Israel in practice, if not in words, and worse ever for the Palestinians.

So isn't it the old good guy/bad guy, the old good cop/bad cop game that's being played with you?

●Maybe can look at in this way. But we look at it from our point-of-view that [if we are] coming back to the jungle let us send the players who can play the game of the jungle.

■They're already here. I meet with them too.

●Yes, they are already here too.

■And frankly they don't have such nice things to say about your meetings with Mr. Baker.

●Yes, OK. In a certain moment, I will give him [speaking of Mr. Baker] my phone number. [Note: This refers, of course, to Baker's Congressional testimony last year when chastised the Israelis about not being serious about peace and publicly gave them the number of the White House].

■Actually, it wasn't your phone number I thought you should give him.

●In a certain moment -- I am sure and I told him and others about this -- "Maybe I will give you my phone

something like this: "Mr. Baker is engaged in shuttle diplomacy with all the leaders of the region and we've informed him that, as people who live under an occupation, we cannot be the negotiators under such conditions and I gave him the address and phone number of Mr. Arafat in Tunis and encouraged him, on his way back to America, to make a stop to see our leadership." Why didn't you say something like this?

●It is the decision of Arafat to take.

■Arafat doesn't want to meet Baker anymore?

●No, it is the decision of him when I will say such a sentence.

■You're suggesting that Arafat doesn't want the Secretary to include the PLO in this round of shuttling?

●You don't understand me well. In the first meeting with Baker, Arafat was isolated in Tunis. In the second meeting with Baker a lot of people, media and diplomatic people, they were ready to go and try to find from Arafat what is the real relationship between what is going on in Jerusalem and what is going on in Tunis. After the third meeting with Baker France was so anxious to invite Arafat and to have a meeting in Paris. If the mother of Baker had not died, then after this fourth meeting you would see Arafat, another time, as in the old time, invited by more than one President and State Europe.

And the Americans will be forced, and the Israelis will be forced... either to come quickly and accept Europe, telling them that you can enter the conference but not through Arafat who they are trying to isolate. But the price then is to have an international conference which is the Europe demand. Or alternatively the Europeans will find that the only side who is ready to insist that Europe must be in the discussions is the Palestinians and so they will develop their relations with the PLO and that is what is happening now.

Now is PLO is not isolated, Arafat is not isolated.

Concluded.

ians, were wounded. The rebels' clandestine radio Farabundo Marti said their forces had killed or wounded 25 government troops in clashes on Wednesday and Thursday.

At an unprecedented 23-day session of talks last month in Mexico the rebel and government envoys agreed on a range of constitutional reforms affecting the justice and electoral systems and enhancing civilian control over the military.

The FMLN now says the government is dragging its feet by refusing to ratify the reforms until a ceasefire is signed.

The government says the rebels are mounting a campaign to destabilise the country with strikes, sabotage and fresh violence.

Plan

Part of this plan, the government says, is a wave of take-overs by poor peasants of agricultural land in the west and centre of the country -- a phenomenon not seen for several years, and a reminder from the past of the bitter conflicts over land ownership that many see as a principal cause of the civil war.

In another echo of the past, a group calling itself the "Salvadoran anti-Communist Front" this week began circulating threats against United Nations and other international bodies, apparently to coincide with the setting up of a UN group in El Salvador to observe human rights.

A leaflet distributed in the Zona Rosa (pink zone) cafe district of San Salvador warned recipients against serving "the internationalists who are conspiring with communism to take over our national territory."

The UN Security Council this week approved setting up the observer body, known as Onusal, to verify a human rights accord signed by the government and rebels last July. The most tangible result of the peace talks so far, it is expected to start functioning from around July 1.

"For the first time in life I don't know where my country is going," one government official, who declined to be named, said recently of the peace process. "It me."—Rtr.



Jimmy Carter



Ronald Reagan



Yitzhak Shamir

'In a certain moment I will give Baker my phone number'