

*Bassam
Shak'a* PORTRAIT OF A
PALESTINIAN

BY MARION WOOLFSON



THIRD WORLD CENTRE

BASSAM SHAK'A

Portrait of a Palestinian

Marion Woolfson

The Library
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CONTENTS

Introduction	7
Strangers in Palestine	9
Exile	23
The Occupation	29
Resistance	37
The 'Autonomy Plan'	45
Prison Conditions	53
A Negative View	71
Double Standards	83
A Reign of Terror	95
Expulsions	107
Assassination Attempts	117
Epilogue	139

Introduction

The sufferings of Bassam Shak'a, mayor of the Palestinian town of Nablus, at the hands of the Zionist occupiers of his country focused the attention of the entire world on the subject of Palestine while his courageous struggle against tyranny ensured that the name of Bassam Shak'a would have a special place in the history books. The international outcry which was caused when the Israelis tried, first, to expel Bassam Shak'a from the land of his ancestors and, then, to kill him had the effect of illuminating very clearly many of the previously-hidden facts about Palestine. Because of the pretence that Israel was operating a 'benevolent occupation' — a pretence which was fostered in every way possible by Israel's supporters in the West — and owing to the continual distortion and suppression of the facts, there has been little knowledge or understanding in the West of the plight of the people of Palestine.

Now, however, thanks to Bassam Shak'a and other equally brave Palestinian martyrs, who have sacrificed their lives or their limbs for their country, the world is becoming aware of the tragedy of a people who are either living in exile after having been brutally expelled or forced to flee from their country, are second-class citizens in their own homeland or exist under an illegal, alien and hateful occupation, enduring bitter oppression, savage persecution and cynical enslavement as well as every imaginable kind of injustice and humiliation.

By his fortitude, determination and heroic behaviour, the mayor of Nablus has demonstrated to the international community the nature of Palestine and its people. Those who read this, his story, will, at the same time, be acquainting themselves with the story of the people of Palestine.



Strangers in Palestine

Bassam Shak'a was born in Nablus in 1930. He is the son of Ahmed Shak'a, a rich merchant and property-owner who owned a soap factory, a cinema and a petrol station. The young Bassam, who was one of eleven children — five boys and six girls — was educated in Nablus. He possessed the typical, fierce love of the Palestinian for his country and the equally typical Arab love of home and family. The Shak'as were a close-knit, united family who enjoyed nothing better than being together, especially when they set off on expeditions to other parts of their beloved Palestine. Sometimes, they visited Jaffa or Tel Aviv and, often, on these trips and also sometimes in the course of their daily lives, they encountered the indigenous Jews of Palestine who were Arabs in every sense of the word and who were looked upon by their Muslim and Christian neighbours as brethren and friends.

Then, the young Bassam began to hear a strange, frightening and alien word: this word was 'Zionism' and, soon, it became associated in his mind with the East European Jews who had settled in the country and who, to his surprise and dismay, treated the Muslim and Christian Palestinians with hatred, contempt and disdain. It was not long before he became aware that the newcomers intended to take over his country. Looking back, now, he finds it strange that the entire world accepted, without question, the assurances of the Zionists — which are being made to this day — that it was never their intention to make the whole of Palestine into a Jewish State.

The world, however, unquestioningly accepted then — as it has accepted until comparatively recently — statements which were illogical, contradictory and, obviously, untrue. It was pretended that the Palestinians had deprived themselves of statehood by refusing to accept the partition of their country with the larger and more fertile part being handed over to a

minority group of foreign settlers. In the course of his studies, Bassam became aware that there was no precedent in international or any other kind of law that permitted a people to be dispossessed and their homeland dismembered on such a flimsy and spurious pretext but, he says now, looking back on what happened, the West was only too happy to be fooled and brainwashed. The majority of Zionists in the West were, themselves, of European or American birth, and their propaganda was skilful and sophisticated. In the face of their carefully-planned, expensive and impudent campaign, the voices of the desperate and distressed Palestinians were 'lost on the desert air.'

As time went on, the struggle became more a fight for survival on the part of the Palestinians than one which sought to emphasise their national rights. 'There we were,' says Shak'a, 'having to convince the world not only that we were a people but that we actually existed before we could even think about embarking on the struggle for our inalienable rights.'

Because of their overwhelming sense of self-righteousness, the Zionists have never been prepared to concede that they have been in any way in the wrong, and this attitude has led to a situation which has caused increasing complications for them.

As Shak'a puts it: 'To perpetuate a lie, you have to cover up the truth in every direction. You have to stem all the little tributaries which run into the main river but, as you block one channel, another one springs a leak.' He is, of course, far too modest and unassuming a man to point to the obvious fact that much of the unpalatable truth about the Zionist role in the occupied territories, which has recently been revealed to a hitherto-deluded world, became known because of his courageous actions.

But, to return to those early days, it should have been obvious to anyone who was anxious to learn the

truth that some very strange plans were afoot for the people of Palestine. Palestinian doubts and fears were ruthlessly dismissed by the Western powers even in the face of the resolution adopted at the 1942 Zionist Biltmore Convention which called for a Jewish State in the whole of Palestine and announced that the Jewish minority in Palestine would grant minority rights to the Palestinian Arab majority.

To world-wide Jewish acclaim, the Zionists went even farther at their Atlantic City Convention in 1944 because, then, they not only called for a Jewish State in the whole of Palestine 'undivided and undiminished' but, according to the Jewish writer, Dr Hannah Arendt, in *Zionism Reconsidered* (Macmillan): 'This time the Arabs were simply not mentioned in the resolution, which obviously leaves them the choice between voluntary emigration or second-class citizenship.'

As Bassam grew to manhood, he became increasingly aware of Zionist intentions regarding both Palestine and its Arab inhabitants and also of the strange, warped viewpoint of the Zionists who, at the same time as they considered it permissible to perform atrocities in order to fulfil their aims, insisted that the world should regard their case as morally justified. Thus, Mrs Golda Meir, a Prime Minister of Israel, was to declare that 'there is no such thing as a Palestinian people . . . they do not exist.'

Also, from the beginning, official Zionist books, newspapers, magazines and pamphlets referred to 'the population' when they meant the Jews. There were special departments (staffed by Jews) to deal with 'Arab affairs' and Palestinians who had been born in the country in which their ancestors had lived for many generations were described as 'foreigners' or 'strangers'.

Although the vast majority of Western supporters of Zionism accepted without thought or question this odd, blinkered attitude, Bassam Shak'a and his

fellow-Palestinians were aware that the reason it existed was because as soon as the Zionists acknowledged that there was, indeed, a Palestinian people, it would become apparent to the whole world that they had an undeniable right to self-determination and that this right had been usurped by the Zionists.

'Right from the beginning,' says Shak'a, 'they have underestimated us. They never made any attempt to understand us, perhaps because they thought the subject was of no importance. Now, however, they are learning their mistake. They have always blamed "agitators" and "inciters" and "instigators" for every single gesture of Palestinian resistance. When they are confronted with defiance, they say to the Palestinian mayors, "You put the people up to this kind of behaviour", and they simply refuse to understand that they have been encountering the will of the people. The Palestinians are capable of thinking and acting for themselves, but the Zionists seem to be unable to grasp this simple fact.'

This may well be because the Zionists have become the self-appointed 'representatives' of 'all the Jews in the world'. In fact, of course, they represent no one except themselves, but by their failure to repudiate Zionism, the majority of Jews appear tacitly to accept the Zionist claims. The Palestinians, therefore, tend to be judged by the same criteria in Zionist eyes.

Bassam Shak'a speaks with warmth and gratitude about those Jews who have rejected Zionism. The tragedy, of course, for the Arabs of Palestine and, to a certain extent, the Jews of Israel too, is that the words of the true prophets of Judaism have been ignored. One of them was Asher Ginzburg who used the pseudonym *Ahad Ha'am* (One of the People) and who warned the Zionists of the dangers posed by their behaviour.

He wrote, in 1891, about the Jewish settlers in Palestine: 'Serfs they were in the lands of the Diaspora

and suddenly they find themselves in unrestricted freedom and this change has awakened in them an inclination to despotism. They treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, deprive them of their rights, offend them without cause and even boast of these deeds; and nobody among us opposes this despicable and dangerous inclination.' He also deplored the fact that the East European Jewish settlers had refused to learn the language of the country or to study the spirit of the people, and he referred to the fact that the Zionists had assumed that the Arabs were 'savages' who did not understand what was happening around them. 'This is, however,' he wrote, 'a great error,' because the Arabs understood only too well and if they made no protest it was only because they did not yet see a danger for their future in the Zionist activities.

In 1911, he wrote: 'As to the war against the Jews in Palestine — I am a spectator from afar with an aching heart, particularly because of the want of insight and understanding shown on our side to an extreme degree. As a matter of fact, it was evident twenty years ago that the day would come when the Arabs would stand up against us.'

One cannot help but wonder what Ahad Ha'am would have made of the present situation today if he had still been alive. Looking back, Bassam Shak'a says: 'I realised even when I was quite young just how the fate of Palestine had been planned. The people didn't count. Was there anything we could have done at the time to prevent the disaster? I don't think so because the entire world not only chose to ignore what was happening to us but also actively supported the Zionists.'

Although there have been many attempts to obscure the facts about the origins of the Palestinians, they are unquestionably the descendants of the earliest inhabitants of Palestine and of the Arabs who arrived there 1,300 years ago because, as Professor Maxime

Rodinson, a Jewish historian, makes clear in his book, *Israel and the Arabs* (Penguin Books), the two groups merged and became one people.

Apart from the fact that, when the East European Jewish settlers began arriving in Palestine, ninety-two per cent of the population were Arabs, the Jews had absolutely no legitimate claim to Palestine and it was ludicrous to suggest that they had simply because, for a comparatively short length of time, there had been a Jewish kingdom two thousand years previously. As for the Balfour Declaration, Britain had no right whatever to dispose of Palestine without consulting the indigenous majority population.

In addition to the false statement that the Palestinians had lost their rights of citizenship in their own country because they had rejected a monstrously unjust partition, it was also fictitiously claimed that the Palestinians who had been expelled had lost their right of return as they had 'left of their own free will' because 'they were ordered to do so by the Arab leaders.' Even if it were true that they had left voluntarily, there is no law which states that people who leave their country should be deprived of the right to return to it.

On the one hand, the Zionists were calling on Jews from all over the world to immigrate to Israel while, on the other, they were using the weakest possible arguments to refuse re-entry to the Palestinians who had been expelled. Having seen what had happened to his people, Bassam Shak'a found the West's reaction a depressing one.

Palestinians were forced, at gun-point, to leave their homes, their farms, their lands. 'Many thousands of Palestinian families had tragic and heart-rending stories to tell,' Shak'a says, 'but who listened to them? Nobody in the West was interested: they accepted the stupid lies because it was easier for their consciences that way.'

Years later, there were no shame-faced apologies, not even from those who had been most assiduous in disseminating the falsehoods, when the truth was finally revealed in the West. Nevertheless, it represented a turning-point and heralded the beginnings of an awareness that the people of Palestine had been the victims of one of the greatest injustices in history. The Palestinians, themselves, knew that there was no truth in the story which had been endlessly repeated that they had left their country following 'broadcast orders from the Arab leaders' but it was not until 1959 that the lie was demolished in the West when a Palestinian, Professor Walid Khalidi, carried out a great deal of painstaking research into the monitored recordings of the so-called 'broadcasts' and learned that, far from calling on the Palestinians to flee, the Arab leaders had repeatedly told them to stay where they were. In 1961, Erskine Childers told the full story in a British magazine, *The Spectator*, and, since then, many people in the West have come to realise that the Palestinians did not voluntarily leave their country and that the vast majority were ruthlessly driven out.

The Zionists also managed to conceal, until comparatively recent years, that after the inhabitants had been driven out, 385 Palestinian villages were totally destroyed.

It will only be a matter of time, says Shak'a, before other, more recent and even more horrifying facts are revealed because he firmly believes that the truth cannot be hidden for ever. Nevertheless, in spite of all his first-hand experience of the tactics of the Zionists, Bassam Shak'a occasionally expresses amazement at some particularly blatant example of effrontery and cynicism. For example, the claim is still being made repeatedly that it was never the Zionist intention to expel the Palestinians and yet this subject was most fully discussed at the Poale Zion (Labour Zionist)

conference at Zurich in 1937 when David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir, who were both later to become Prime Ministers of Israel, and other Zionist leaders planned the removal of the Palestinians to the neighbouring Arab countries. David Ben Gurion said: ' . . . in the proposal to transfer Arab populations out of the area, if possible of their own free will, if not — by coercion, a possibility is offered to enlarge Jewish colonisation', and he added that he did not look upon partition as the 'final solution' to the problem of Palestine as 'this country was not given for us to partition it — for it constitutes a single unit, not only historically, but also from the natural and economic standpoint.'

Given that this was the Zionist attitude even as far back as 1937, everything that has taken place in Palestine until the present day should have been predictable.

Indeed, some present-day Israeli leaders have unwisely revealed facts which they once denied most vehemently. In a passage of his autobiography which was censored in Israel and in Western countries but was published in the *New York Times*, another former Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, described how he, David Ben Gurion and Yigal Allon, who was later to become Foreign Minister of Israel, discussed 'the fate of the civilian population of Lod [Lydda] and Ramleh, numbering some 50,000 . . . B.G. waved his hand in a gesture which said "Drive them out!" Allon and I held a consultation. I agreed that it was essential to drive the inhabitants out . . . There was no way of avoiding the use of force and warning shots . . .'

Not surprisingly, Shak'a was aware, throughout his childhood, of tension and he felt a terrible sense of foreboding as he grew older and realised what was happening to his country and his people. He explains that, at first, it was like having a new neighbour moving into one's district. 'You are friendly and welcoming,' he says, 'but the newcomer is hostile, aloof

and arrogant. Why?' Suddenly, the horrific knowledge dawns on you that the new neighbour not only covets your property but feels he has a right to live there and you do not. Because there is neither sense nor logic in his reasoning, it is almost impossible to find weapons with which to fight it. You can't appeal to his better nature because he does not have one and if you attempt to defend your life, your liberty and your property, you are called an 'aggressor' or even a 'terrorist'.

The difficulties faced by the people of Palestine in the years leading up to 1948 were attested to in comparatively recent years by a leading Zionist, Yeshayahu Ben Porat. In the course of a discussion on Zionism, he was reported by the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* on 8 September, 1972 to have said that he had arrived in Palestine in 1945 and belonged to a Zionist youth movement. From the age of seven, he added, he was given military training with the aim of conquering Palestine. He said: 'As a child in Austria, I grew up with the feeling that there would come a day when we would have to conquer the country by force of arms. I was trained to despise the Arab population . . . this is the concept that has stuck to my conscience since then — that the land of Israel is ours, and the Arabs that live in it will be authorised to continue living there, on condition they do not bother us. And if they bother — we shall expel them . . . They did not train us to respect the Arab neighbour . . . The hidden thought, and sometimes the overt thought, was: they shall go away and we shall stay . . .'

From a comparatively early age, Bassam Shak'a appreciated the supreme irony of a situation where he, a Palestinian youth, was aware that the groundwork was being laid for the occupation of his country by foreigners who, in many cases, had not even left their own countries but were being trained, as Ben Porat had pointed out, to 'conquer' the land of another people.

'But what could we do?' says Shak'a. 'We were powerless.' It was like some Greek tragedy, inexorably unfolding, and the inevitable outcome was the establishment, on 15 May, 1948, of the State of Israel which greatly exceeded the territory originally designated for the Jewish State by the United Nations partition recommendation of November, 1947. From the time of the recommendation, the Zionists had attacked and occupied additional areas of Palestine which had been designated as the Arab State. Nevertheless, when the Arab armies entered the territory which the Zionists had illegally seized, in an effort to prevent the whole of Palestine from falling into Zionist hands, this was presented to the world, by propagandists, as 'the invasion by the Arab armies of the infant state of Israel and an attempt to exterminate the Jews.'

Palestinian attempts to regain their rights and the fully justified Arab reactions to Israeli attacks on Arab territory have invariably been interpreted as 'annihilation attempts' and practically every Zionist article or letter published in any Western newspaper has, when discussing Palestine, made reference to the 'holocaust' and claimed that the Jews in Israel are threatened with 'genocide' although, in fact, the true victims of genocide attempts are the Palestinian Arabs.

Dr Nahum Goldmann, former president of the World Jewish Congress, was reported in *Le Monde* on 29 May, 1970 as saying: 'Not only did we fail to understand the psychology of the Arabs, but we denied all responsibility for what they consider to be the great injustice done to them. They consider that we took a country from them in which they had been the majority for centuries . . . the fact that they had not governed the country is secondary: dozens of other peoples have recently achieved independence and nobody thought to contest their right to it on the grounds that they had been under foreign domination . . .'

It is interesting to note the use of the word 'we' by Dr Goldmann, an American citizen. He added: 'We have tried to impose the *fait accompli* of our presence. We hoped to achieve our aims by military force or the intervention of foreign powers.'

Exile

In 1948, Shak'a began to realise that he could serve the cause of Palestine better by leaving his country which was now divided, with the Zionists occupying the larger and more fertile part and Jordan in possession of what came to be known as the West Bank while Egypt held Gaza.

The outside world knew little — and cared even less — about the tragedy of the people of Palestine. Those who had been away from home on holiday or business and who attempted to return after 15 May were arrested as 'infiltrators' and imprisoned or deported and their property expropriated.

The Zionists immediately began settling large numbers of Jews in the territory which had been seized in the United Nations-designated Arab State in order to prevent the Palestinians, who were living in refugee camps in the Arab countries surrounding their homeland, from returning for many of them were making repeated efforts, usually at night, to go back to tend their crops.

The acts of resistance of some of the desperate and frustrated young Palestinians who 'infiltrated' were punished by savage Israeli reprisals on the host countries and this, in turn, created tensions between these countries and the Palestinians.

Shak'a abandoned his studies and made his way to Syria where he joined the Ba'th Party because he felt it provided an opportunity to work for Arab unity and would provide a firm base for the common Arab struggle against Zionism and imperialism.

The word 'Ba'th' means 'renaissance', and Bassam Shak'a felt strongly that a regeneration was necessary, not merely for Palestine but for the entire Arab world which had been carved up into a series of separate states with artificially-created boundaries by the imperialists whose 'divide and rule' policies had caused turmoil throughout the entire world.

Shak'a became one of the most outstanding and

clear-thinking of the Ba'thist leaders. The party, which had been founded by Michel Aflaq, declared its aims to be unity, liberty and socialism, but eventually these slogans and political theories were adopted by various parties and regimes, some of which did no more than pay lip-service to them. The seeds were then sown of the schisms which exist today. In describing the situation, Tariq Aziz, the Vice-Premier of Iraq, said, 'The movement was strong and active during the 1950s and was a rallying-point for millions of the Arab masses. With this support and its youthful strength, it won great victories. Then it began to falter, to lose its link with the masses and eventually its ability to confront imperialism and Zionism and fulfil its promises.'

Like many other dedicated young men, Bassam Shak'a became disillusioned by the contradictions between early promises and eventual developments and also by splits within the Ba'thist ranks, and he left the party in 1959.

Two years later, Shak'a got married and his wife, Anaya—they now have four children—has proved a staunch and courageous partner and helpmate, a woman of serene beauty whose indomitable spirit, deep sense of compassion and sparkling intelligence have sustained and supported Shak'a throughout the long years of struggle although he says, laughing: 'I am afraid that sometimes I get so involved with the problems of Palestine that I tend to neglect Anaya, but she never complains.' They both reflect, sometimes, on the work of Palestinian poets who have written, with infinite pathos, of the feeling of the Palestinian for his homeland and which, perhaps, explains better than anything else the steadfast determination of men like Bassam Shak'a to oppose tyranny and injustice. He recalls the words of a moving poem written by a fellow-citizen of Nablus, Fadwa Tuqan, whose poems were considered so 'dangerous'

by the Zionists that, after their seizure of Nablus in 1967, General Moshe Dayan personally forbade Fadwa Tuqan to continue writing and publishing her work. She wrote:

*For out of your trodden hopes,
Out of your crucified growth,
Out of your stolen smiles,
Your children's smiles,
Out of the wreckage,
And the torture,
Out of the blood-clotted walls,
Out of the quiverings
Of life and death
Life will emerge.
O great land,
O deep wound,
And sole love.*

The problems faced by the Palestinian exiles from 1948 onwards were not understood in the West because the news was still being distorted and suppressed. Events in Jordan in 1970 caused some awareness and there was even more after the massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1978 following an incident which was, eventually, to lead to events which were to cause Bassam Shak'a, the mayor of Nablus, to become a figure of international renown.

After every real or imagined guerrilla attack or incident of sabotage inside Israel, there would be ruthless bombing of a neighbouring Arab country. The aim was not only to 'punish' the Palestinian resistance fighters in Jordan, Syria or Lebanon as the Israelis pretended but also to attempt to kill as many Palestinians as possible. The vast majority of the tragic victims of these attacks were civilian refugees and also their non-Palestinian neighbours who were attacked deliberately in order to cause feelings of resentment against the Palestinians whose presence was looked upon as being responsible for the 'reprisals'.

After spending two and a half years in Nablus in hiding, Shak'a became a political refugee in Syria where he was imprisoned for nineteen days and then deported to Lebanon. He went from there to Cairo and three years later returned to Jordan at the invitation of the Prime Minister, Wasfi Tal. Many of his fellow-Palestinians, who had fought in the resistance with him, returned also.

Soon, however, there was trouble in Jordan where the Israelis were making repeated attacks on Palestinian villages. Unhappy about the lack of defence against the attacks, the Palestinians organised protest demonstrations and, as a result, Shak'a and his three brothers and their sons were imprisoned for three weeks.

The Occupation

Then came 1967 and the war which was, once more, as with all Israeli aggression, presented to the world as 'a necessary action' because Israel was 'threatened with extermination'. It was not until 1972 that the truth was revealed in the Israeli press, in what came to be known as 'the generals' polemic', when a number of former army generals who had led the attack confessed that Israel had not been under any kind of threat and that the sole purpose of the war was the acquisition of more Arab territory. Amazingly, though, in spite of the startling nature of this disclosure, it was completely ignored by the Western press which has always justified and condoned practically all acts of Israeli aggression on the grounds that Israel is faced with 'annihilation' and 'total destruction' although at whose hands is never made clear. Taking into account Israel's huge army and vast, sophisticated, modern armoury plus its enormous defence budget, it is astonishing that even a gullible and ignorant press should allow itself to be fooled to such an extent.

'Israel explains all its actions by talking of the past sufferings of the Jews,' Shak'a says. 'But haven't Palestinians suffered? Don't we still suffer?'

He adds: 'You see, the trouble is that the Zionists have never changed their thinking at all: they still have the same attitude and beliefs as they did a century ago. They have simply failed to recognise the fact that the world has changed. Imperialism and colonialism are out of date. The European countries have got rid of their colonies, but Israel is turning the clock back. In order to achieve the basic aims of Zionism, it has been necessary to form alliances with the most reactionary regimes in the world. Israel's main ally is the United States and what has happened as a result? You have the example of all the presidential candidates in the United States spending more time declaring their commitment to Israel and talking about Israel's problems than they spend on the prob-

lems of their own country. The only time the United States will have a sensible, even-handed president with a humane policy on the subject of Palestine will be' — and here he goes off into peals of laughter — 'if a president is hired from abroad.'

Then Shak'a becomes serious again as he says: 'All the atrocities committed by Israel in the occupied territories are an inevitable result of this old-fashioned colonialist mentality which simply does not accept the fact that the populations of the colonies are free and equal human beings with basic human and civil rights.'

He refers to Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention which explicitly states: 'Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territories . . . are prohibited regardless of their motives.'

Yet, immediately after the occupation, Israel was carrying out wholesale deportations from the occupied territories.

By 1972, nearly 17,000 Palestinians had been deported on the flimsiest of pretexts and, often, on no pretext at all. Large numbers of doctors, lawyers, religious leaders, teachers, writers and poets were summarily expelled without charge or trial. 'This was because the Zionists wanted to deprive the people of any leadership,' says Shak'a. 'As I said before, they judge us by their own standards and they refuse to believe that the people of Palestine are not being "told" to do anything but are acting of their own free will and out of their own convictions.'

Poets and writers who committed the 'crime' of writing on Arab or Palestinian nationalist themes were persecuted. Often, they were imprisoned without charge or trial or held under house arrest. Those who were living in exile were hunted down and murdered. One of the most talented of Palestinian writers, Ghassan Kanafani, was killed by a car bomb in Beirut in 1972. It did not occur to Shak'a at the time that,

later, this identical method of attack would be used on him. One of Kanafani's stories which always brings tears to the eyes of Palestinians when they read it is entitled 'The Land of the Sad Oranges' and it says: 'As for your mother, she eyed the oranges silently, and all the orange trees your father had left behind to the Jews were reflected in his eyes; all the wholesome orange trees he had acquired one by one were visible in his face and glistened through the tears he could not check, even in front of the officer. When we arrived in Sidon that afternoon, we had become homeless . . .'

Thousands of Palestinians were arrested or deported for the 'crime' of 'belonging to hostile organisations'. Members of the Knesset (Israeli parliament) who had been responsible for the massacres of Deir Yassin, Qibya and Kafr Qasim declared that it was 'an offence against the security of the state of Israel' to have dealings with members of Palestinian organisations or even to express the view that Israel should not be a wholly Jewish state.

The Israelis either could not, or would not, see that the entire population of the occupied territories supported the Palestine Liberation Organisation and that the PLO was overwhelmingly considered, by the Palestinians, to represent them. It was impossible to force the Palestinians to think the way the Zionists wanted them to think and so the repression increased in severity. The Israelis attempted to turn the entire Palestinian people into a nation of traitors, collaborators and informers and, when these efforts failed, they imposed brutal and barbaric 'collective punishments' on whole towns and villages: these were, in many cases, identical with the 'collective punishments' suffered by the Jews at the hands of the Nazis in the 1930s. However, the voices of Jews which were raised in loud and vehement protest against ill-treatment of European Jews were not heard at all when it came to

the ill-treatment of Palestinians at the hands of Israelis.

At the time, the events of those days seemed horrific, says Shak'a, who was, of course, unaware that even worse was to follow in subsequent years. Curfews were imposed which lasted for days and sometimes weeks, on end. Palestinians were rounded up and forced to stand out in the open in indoor clothing all night in the biting wind or pouring rain.

Torture was widespread. The vast majority of those found guilty of 'security' offences had been convicted solely on the evidence of their own confessions which had been extracted by a systematic campaign of torture which, with the honourable exception of the *Sunday Times* in June, 1977, was ignored by the Western media although, unknown to Israel's supporters in the West, it has been very widely reported in the Israeli press. Many, many examples of the barbaric torture methods used have been given and in April, 1978, for example, *Yediot Aharonot* cited an Israeli police officer who said that an investigation could be finished 'in no time, using a few bottles in the rectum and some electric shocks.' The officer made this admission to the journalist, Orly Azulai, 'openly and with some pride'.

Groups of Palestinians — often they were school-children — were beaten up for no apparent reason. Palestinian-owned land was expropriated — on the spurious ground of 'security' — and no compensation was paid, and then the land was fenced off for Jewish settlement. Palestinian crops, both in Israel and the occupied territories, were sprayed with poison, and houses were demolished as a 'punishment' for 'security offenders' although, generally, those arrested had not yet been charged with any offence when their houses were blown up.

On 6 November, 1975, for instance, *The Times* reported that, using bulldozers and explosives, Israeli

troops had blown up four houses in a village two miles south of Bethlehem. They were the homes of some young men who had been arrested on suspicion of planting a bomb. The report stated: 'None of the men have so far been tried for the alleged offence. Four of the suspects lived in the houses blown up but none was the house-owner.' The report continued that Elias Freij, the mayor of Bethlehem, had commented bitterly: 'The Israelis talk to us of co-existence but after eight years of occupation, they are still blowing up Arab houses.'

Whole families, which generally included elderly persons and young children, were thrown out into the street when their homes were demolished. In the majority of cases, the houses belonged to relatives (sometimes aunts, uncles, cousins or grandparents) of alleged 'security suspects'. On 19 September, 1977 the Israeli military authorities demolished the houses of the father and uncle of Hader Salaam (who had never lived in either of them). He had returned from Argentina to get married and had 'confessed' under torture that he had met a member of Al-Fatah abroad. This was his only 'crime'.

Resistance

Professor Israel Shahak, an Israeli Jew who was in a Nazi concentration camp as a child and who is now chairman of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights and is a courageous and outspoken defender of Palestinian rights in Israel and the occupied territories, wrote an article, in 1973, in reply to a vicious attack on him in the Israeli press. *Ma'ariv*, *Yediot Aharonot*, *Davar*, the *Jerusalem Post* and other papers published innumerable lies about him without giving him any chance to defend himself. *Ha'aretz* accepted his article for publication but, three weeks later, the editor, Gershon Shochen, said that he had decided not to publish any article written by Israel Shahak. Eventually, an abridged version of the article appeared as a supplement of *Middle East International* (in January, 1974). Professor Shahak wrote: 'In my opinion, the Israeli occupation regime in the conquered territories is not only not a liberal one: it is in fact one of the most cruel and repressive regimes in modern times . . . It is only natural that a people whose existence is denied, and who are denied any right to wage a political struggle, should choose another form of struggle . . .'

Although Professor Shahak, personally, condemned certain aspects of this struggle, he recognised the reasons for it; but the Israeli authorities have always chosen to ignore the basic cause of Palestinian acts of resistance and to deny their own blatant provocation or else to claim justification. It was because of this utter refusal, on the part of the Zionists, to face reality that Bassam Shak'a was later to find himself in trouble.

Israel Shahak, whom Bassam Shak'a describes as 'an honest and courageous man', wrote (in *Pi-Haaton*, the weekly student newspaper of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) in 1975: 'It is my opinion that Israel is a racist state in the full sense of the term. In this state, people of non-Jewish origin are constantly

and quite legally discriminated against in the most important areas of life.' He was writing about Israel but, of course, the situation in the occupied territories was a great deal worse.

It is understandable that the Palestinians should resist, with whatever means are available to them, the cruel and inhuman occupation of their country and the many acts of savagery which have been committed against them but what the outside world does not realise is just how difficult it is to wage any kind of 'conventional' struggle.

Bassam Shak'a has personal knowledge of many cases which illustrate the problems that exist. For example, Ahmed Bakr Hijazi, a 28-year-old Palestinian from a refugee camp near Nablus — which was later to be over-run by the Israelis — was a member of Al-Fatah guerrilla organisation. He entered part of the territory of his homeland in January, 1965 and his unit was intercepted by an Israeli army patrol.

Hijazi was wounded and taken prisoner and the Israelis kept the matter secret for four months and then sentenced Hijazi to death on four charges of 'using firearms against defence forces, infiltration, carrying explosives and attempted sabotage.' Although the prisoner was a soldier, recognised as such by the Geneva Convention, the Israelis refused to allow him to be represented by a foreign lawyer. Eventually, the sentence was changed to one of thirty years' imprisonment. This sentence was in flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention because the region where Hijazi was captured was illegally occupied by Israel as it was in the area designated by the United Nations partition recommendation as part of the Arab State. This document, incidentally, is the only claim to legality which Israel has ever been able to produce, and it is significant that the Zionists always refer to it in order to justify their claim to Palestine and yet Israel has chosen to flout innumerable United Nations resolutions

on the subject of Palestine.

It is obvious that any Palestinian attempting to engage in armed struggle with the occupying forces illegally in possession of his homeland will not, if captured, be treated according to the requirements of international law. Some groups of Palestinians have, therefore, chosen to engage in acts such as aircraft hijacking which, whatever they did or did not achieve, certainly brought the subject of Palestine to international attention. However, the world's press, which had failed to condemn the theft of an entire country and the holding to ransom of its indigenous population, protested vehemently against such acts and, to make matters more difficult for the Palestinians, invariably misrepresented them.

It was this hypocritical attitude which led to the events that were to make Bassam Shak'a into a figure of world-wide fame. These events began, in a sense, in September 1972 when eight Palestinians armed with Kalashnikov machine pistols and hand grenades entered the Israeli pavilion at the Munich Olympic Games. In the struggle which took place, Israeli weightlifter Joseph Romano and security guard Moshe Weinberg were shot and killed. The Palestinians then captured and tied up nine members of the Israeli team (although the world's press described them as 'athletes', they were practically all security personnel). The Palestinians demanded the release of two hundred political prisoners in Israel and safe passage out of Germany.

The guerrillas and their hostages were taken to a military airport in order to make it look as though Israel were prepared to do a deal. What the world did not realise, however, and what it still does not realise is that Israel is not in the least concerned with the loss of Israeli lives and, therefore, at Israeli insistence, German sharpshooters were ordered to attack the guerrillas. In the course of this attack, the hostages

were killed either by the explosion of hand-grenades or by gunshot wounds and, in one case, by suffocation from smoke. The Israelis and the world's press, however, presented what took place as 'a cold-blooded massacre' which received much condemnation from a world which had hardly uttered a word of protest at the murder, by Israeli troops, of hundreds of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese men, women and children during massive bomb attacks on south Lebanon.

There were further attempts, by the Palestinians, to take hostages in futile efforts to bargain with the Israelis for the release of Palestinians in Israeli prisons. On one occasion, the guerrillas demanded the release of twenty-six prisoners (this was on the twenty-sixth anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel), one for each year of Israel's existence. Among the prisoners were two Israeli Jews who had been convicted of working for the Palestinian cause. The hostages who were seized on this occasion, in the town of Ma'alot, were repeatedly said, by the world's media, to be 'schoolchildren' although, in fact, they were military cadets.

The Israelis pretended to give in to the conditions imposed by the guerrillas but, wrote David Hirst, Middle East correspondent of the *Guardian*, in his book, *The Gun and the Olive Branch* (Faber and Faber), this was 'no more than an outward show of compassion to impress an anguished public.' The Israeli press had made clear that the Israeli government 'planned to storm the school all along, and shortly before night fell the assault force went in . . .' Twenty of the hostages were killed during the attack and they were, of course, said to have been 'massacred' by the guerrillas.

In March 1978, a group of Palestinians arrived on the coast of Israel by sea and, on the road to Tel Aviv, they hijacked a bus. Israeli troops stormed the bus and, as a result, thirty-four hostages were killed. Israel

then launched what *The Times* described as 'a massive revenge raid on Lebanon' in the course of which about one thousand Lebanese civilians (this figure was given by Western diplomats) were killed and more than one hundred thousand people rendered homeless.

As time passed, the fact that the deaths of the hostages were directly attributable to the Israeli storming of the bus was obscured and the Western press began repeatedly to refer to the 'massacre' by Palestinians of the hostages. Later, Bassam Shak'a's attempt to put this occurrence into its true perspective was to lead to a series of appalling events.

The 'Autonomy Plan'

Bassam Shak'a became mayor of Nablus in 1976 and then in 1977 two events occurred which led to even greater oppression of the Palestinians on the West Bank than there had been before. The extremely right-wing Menachem Begin became Prime Minister at the head of the Likud coalition of which his Herut Party was a component. Begin, a former leader of a Zionist terrorist gang which had been responsible for innumerable murders and kidnappings in the 1940s in addition, of course, to the massacre of Deir Yassin and the blowing-up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, repeatedly referred to the PLO as 'a gang of murderers' and compared them with the Nazis. He also refused, after the visit of President Sadat of Egypt to Jerusalem at the end of 1977, to consider any Palestinian participation in the so-called 'peace talks' which were to be conducted with Egypt and the United States.

The Palestinians, naturally, rejected the 'autonomy' which Begin proposed, not merely because they had not been consulted but because they were to be offered far less self-rule than the Jews had in Poland, the native country and birthplace of Menachem Begin, at the time when Begin lived there. The 'autonomy' was to be 'for people but not for territory' so that the Palestinians were expected to continue to exist under Israeli military rule.

As representatives of the Palestinian people, the mayors of the West Bank towns were the especial targets of the Israeli authorities. 'On the one hand,' says Shak'a, 'they tell the world how wonderfully democratic they are and, on the other, they try in every way possible to restrict and silence mayors who have been democratically elected by the people. Why do they do this? Because the mayors put forward the views of the electorate and attempt to act in their best interests instead of supporting the Zionist aims.'

He gave an example of this strange and blinkered

Zionist attitude by describing how some leading journalists from the Palestinian newspapers *Al Shaab* and *Al Fajr* were 'punished' for their 'misdeeds' by being administratively restricted to the districts in which they lived so that they were unable to travel to work. Their 'crime'? They had failed to apply 'strict self-censorship', said the military authorities, and they had been 'guilty' of publishing material which, although it was not prohibited, should not have appeared because it was 'unhelpful to Israel'. 'In other words,' said Shak'a, 'they expect us to be more Zionist than they are themselves.' On 1 June, 1980, the Israeli government banned both *Al Shaab* and *Al Fajr* from circulating in the West Bank or Gaza because the newspapers were, said the Zionist authorities, 'inciting the population'. In a joint statement, the editors said: 'The papers have been forbidden because they are anti-autonomy. But no one force can prevent us from raising our voice or achieving our goal of a free Palestinian state led by the PLO.'

It had seemed, before the ridiculous 'autonomy plan', that conditions could not possibly deteriorate any further in the West Bank but, to the despair of the Palestinians under occupation, the barbarities increased in severity. Nablus is the largest town in the West Bank with, says Bassam Shak'a, a population of 105,000. The Zionists claim, however, that there are only 57,000 inhabitants, but this is not surprising because the Israeli authorities invariably minimise the number of Palestinians and multiply the small number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank (many of them have homes in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem and occupy additional accommodation in the West Bank in order to increase the Jewish presence there).

Nablus is also considered, by the Israelis, to be the most 'radical' of the Arab towns. Following the

protests which took place as a result of the Israeli decision to build a Jewish settlement on land seized from the people of Nablus, Bassam Shak'a said: 'This is our land and we will not allow Israeli settlements to evict us from it.'

After his people had held a peaceful demonstration on 17 June, 1979, the mayor declared: 'We have used democratic means to express our rights. The occupiers have shown that their ways are not democratic. Our nation will not be silent at seeing its land taken and its rights denied.'

Bassam Shak'a's daily routine consisted of arriving at his office at seven-thirty each morning and working there until one-thirty. In the afternoons, there would be meetings of the municipality and in the evenings, the citizens of Nablus would call at the mayor's house to ask for advice and assistance with the many, and increasingly severe, problems caused to the unfortunate Palestinian population by the brutal occupation.

Palestinian anger and scorn at the Camp David agreements and the 'autonomy' proposals caused renewed resistance which led to increased repression. Houses were now being blown up all over the West Bank on the flimsiest of pretexts and, as had happened in the past, the Western press failed to present the horrendous facts.

At the beginning of 1979, the home of the Namari family in the Wadi al-Joz district of Jerusalem was blown up because Nasir Effendi had stayed overnight in the house (which was a large villa). When he was arrested, Mr and Mrs Namari and Mr Namari's seventy-year-old father were also arrested and imprisoned.

At the same time, a house rented from the Akari family by Rafiq Khatib on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem had its doors and windows blocked up with concrete (this is what happens when houses are too

close to other buildings to be blown up) and, at the same time, three houses in Nablus were demolished. One of these was the home of Issa Shakhshir who was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment for alleged possession of explosives. His nineteen-year-old wife and their two small babies were thrown out into the street, along with their furniture. One of the worst aspects of these barbaric 'punishments' is that the occupants of the houses are given no time to find other accommodation nor to appeal against the sentences which are always carried out immediately. On one previous occasion, a hotel in Ramallah was blown up because a 'security suspect' had stayed in it.

Many Palestinians are even now living in shacks on the ruins of their former homes and quite a number, with no relatives to take them in, have been forced to sleep in the open air, even in winter. It should be stressed that, in the vast majority of 'security' cases, the prisoners are convicted solely on the evidence of their own 'confessions'. How these confessions are obtained may be judged by a case which was reported in the Israeli press shortly after the wave of arrests which followed the Palestinian reaction to the 'autonomy plan'. The case concerned a military policewoman who lost some documents and, in order to conceal this fact, invented a story of having been robbed of her handbag. She 'identified' a young Palestinian Arab as the 'thief' and, after two days of torture, he 'confessed' to the crime. Then, overcome with remorse, the policewoman admitted that she had lied.

'There are no Palestinian families on the West Bank who have not got terrible stories to tell,' says Shak'a. 'Everyone has relatives or friends who are in prison, who have been deported, who have been tortured, who have been beaten, whose houses have been demolished, whose land has been expropriated, whose crops have been sprayed with poison.'

Israeli anger at Palestinian rejection of the autonomy took many different forms. The military authorities began arresting Palestinians for various trivial 'offences' such as failing to carry their identity cards. Many Palestinians have been arrested for referring to Palestine as 'their' country. A typical incident concerned a student who was returning home after visiting friends in East Jerusalem at eleven o'clock one night. As he passed the post office at Rasheed Street, he was stopped by two military policemen and asked what he was doing there. He replied: 'I have every right to be here — it is my country.'

One of the Israelis said: 'It is not your country, it is our country,' and the student said: 'I can tell by your accent that you come from Morocco and therefore this is not your country.' He was immediately arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment on a charge of 'threatening behaviour'. At the end of the six months, he was told that he would only be released if he agreed to report to the military government on the activities of his fellow-students. He angrily refused to become a spy and so he was kept in prison for a further six months.

When he was eventually released, he was told that the next time he came before an Israeli court, he would be sentenced to life imprisonment.

Prison Conditions

Muhammad Katmash, who had been sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in 1975 simply for receiving military training in the Soviet Union, became seriously ill the following year after prolonged maltreatment and torture. His fellow political prisoners in Nablus jail — among whom were a number of physicians — demanded that he receive immediate medical attention because, without it, he would become blind.

Another tragic case, with which Bassam Shak'a was concerned, was that of Nader al-Afuri which was described in the Israeli newspaper *Al Hamishmar* on 22 February, 1980 by Dr Amnon Kapeliouk whom Bassam describes as 'a courageous man and a good friend'. He is one of the few Israeli journalists who write the truth about the sufferings of the Palestinians.

After prolonged torture, twenty-eight-year-old Al-Afuri, who comes from Nablus, is in a pitiable condition. Dr Kapeliouk wrote: 'He has been neglected and kept under severe prison conditions while very ill for almost a year and a half. He has totally lost his sanity, does not react to his son who was born while he was imprisoned and he does not talk, cannot walk and cannot feed himself.'

Al-Afuri had a 'record' before his arrest in 1978. He had been arrested in 1975 and sentenced to three years' imprisonment on a charge of 'hostile activities' ('offences' such as displaying a Palestinian flag are considered 'hostile activities').

After serving his sentence, Al-Afuri returned to his home in Nablus, and his wife and friends have testified that he was mentally normal and showed absolutely no signs of insanity. Several months after his release, on 30 August, he was arrested and charged, once more, with 'hostile activity' because he was said to have tried to persuade three young men to join a Palestinian organisation.

Several days later, he was brought before a military

judge who issued a judicial detention order for sixty days. At that time, there was a suspicion that something was wrong (the torture invariably takes place in detention centres between the time of arrest and the time of trial) because in the protocol of the hearing not a single word was registered as having been spoken by Nader al-Aturi.

At the end of sixty days, instead of being put on trial or released, Al-Afuri was brought before a military judge on 9 November, 1978 and, following a request by the security authorities, an administrative detention order for seven days was issued and, at the end of that time, the detention was extended by six months. In October, 1978, before the end of the judicial detention, the detainee's wife called on the lawyer Mrs Felicia Langer and told her that when she was permitted to visit her husband, after two months of detention, she found a wreck. He did not recognise her, his eyes were those of a madman and he could hardly move. Mrs Al-Afuri, who was pregnant at the time, was in a state of shock because, when her husband had been taken away from her, he had been a normal, healthy, sane man.

When Mrs Langer heard the story, she remembered that during one of her visits to the prison, some of her clients had told her about a detainee called Nader al-Afuri who was totally insane. The next day, she wrote to the governor of Nablus prison requesting permission to visit Al-Afuri, whose family had asked her to act for him.

She received a reply saying that she could see the detainee on 12 November, 1978. She called at the prison and Al-Afuri was brought into her presence by two other prisoners who were supporting him, one on either side, because he could not walk. He did not recognise her although she had represented him in court in 1975. She attempted to get him to talk, but he did not utter one word and the other prisoners told

her that he was unable to function at all and that his fellow-prisoners had to feed him, dress him and wash him. They said he had lost all contact with the world and seemed to be in another world.

He was unable to write but was assisted to sign a power of attorney with his thumb-print. Amnon Kapeliouk wrote: 'The decision of the authorities to request administrative detention for Nader al-Afuri was surprising. This step is usually taken against such people as the authorities consider to be behind hostile activity, but have no clear evidence against them to bring them to court.' Professor Israel Shahak comments, however, that this was not really surprising because 'this step is usually taken against people who are not broken by imprisonment or torture and who do not "confess".'

Dr Kapeliouk wrote that there seemed to be no justification for holding Al-Afuri in administrative detention because he was not a known Palestinian 'leader' and, besides, there had been a reduction in the number of administrative detainees (in 1974, there were several hundred) because of widespread criticism of this practice.

Amnon Kapeliouk went on to ask what had happened to Nader al-Afuri. There were, he wrote, three possibilities. One was that the detainee was tortured when he was under intensive interrogation in order to force him to confess or to give information and, as a result, he lost his reason. It is, he added, impossible to put an insane man on trial, but if Al-Afuri had been released in such a shocking condition, there would have been a scandal. The only option, therefore, was to keep him under administrative detention until he was well enough to stand trial.

The second possibility, Dr Kapeliouk continued, was that the detainee was not tortured but suffered a 'hysterical shock psychosis' as a result of the detention and interrogation and fear of the trial. Administrative

detention was, thus, considered to be the best solution until Al-Afuri regained his sanity and could be brought to trial.

The third possibility was that Nader al-Afuri was pretending to be insane and so the best thing would be to keep him under administrative detention until he stopped acting and could be charged. At first, Dr Kapeliouk added, the Israeli authorities insisted that the third version was the correct one. They said: 'Al-Afuri is an artist and has to be held in administrative detention until he stops acting.' Mrs Langer said that, at one stage, they decided to find out whether Al-Afuri was acting by burning his forehead with cigarettes.

During one of her visits to Nablus prison, she saw Al-Afuri after he had been transferred there from Ramleh prison and she saw fresh cigarette burns on his forehead. The other prisoners told her that the prison warders used this method as an 'effective' test to find out if Al-Afuri was acting. A letter of complaint — to which no reply was received — was sent to the prison authorities on 23 December, 1979 and shortly afterwards the 'acting' story was dropped.

This means, says Dr Kapeliouk, that only the first two versions remain. In order not to make things too easy for himself, he continues, he is prepared, for the sake of his article, to accept the denial of the Israeli military authorities that Nader al-Afuri was tortured. He is prepared, he says, to accept the second version although it is not easy to believe that a prisoner who had survived three years in prison without harm, in spite of the 'severe prison conditions of Palestinian prisoners', would collapse totally under an interrogation which had used no force and, as a result of such 'mild' interrogation, would become so severely insane.

Nevertheless, he goes on, even if one accepts that most improbable version of events, how is it that the prison authorities allowed the detainee to deteriorate

to such an extent that he has lost all contact with the world and requires a wheel-chair? His lawyer, the mayor of Nablus, international personalities and various institutions all pleaded, adds Dr Kapeliouk, with the prison authorities to take some action to end the agony of Nader al-Afuri by giving him proper treatment in prison or releasing him but more than a year passed before he was released.

On 14 November, 1979, Mrs Langer asked that Nader al-Afuri should be medically examined and, at the same time, Bassam Shak'a asked the military governor of the West Bank to release Al-Afuri because of the state of his mental health.

On 6 December, Amnesty International sent out an urgent call from London asking people throughout the world to demand that the Nablus prison authorities and the Attorney General of Israel should allow Nader al-Afuri to enter hospital so that he could be given proper medical treatment. Mrs Langer had already asked the prison authorities to allow a psychiatrist, Dr Leo Etinger from Oslo University, who was visiting Haifa University, to examine Al-Afuri and assess his condition, but this request and the many other appeals which had been made by various bodies in Israel and abroad were all rejected by the Israeli authorities.

In the meantime, Al-Afuri's condition deteriorated. When the six months' administrative detention ended, the period was extended by another six months. In the course of a fateful meeting, which was to have very far-reaching consequences, Bassam Shak'a asked General Danny Matt, the co-ordinator of the occupied territories, to look into the matter. General Matt promised to do so, but nothing happened.

On 21 December, 1979, Mrs Langer visited Ramleh prison where Nader al-Afuri was brought to her in a wheelchair. His lips twitched continuously, he was deathly pale and, as before, he did not react to his

surroundings. She felt that his condition had dangerously deteriorated and she wrote to the legal adviser to the military governor of the West Bank and threatened to appeal to the Supreme Court and to demand the release of the detainee as, she said, she had tried all other avenues without success. In her letter, the lawyer added an unusual sentence which said: 'If his release shall be under certain conditions [meaning an obligation not to engage in any more 'hostile activities'], the family of my client is willing to discuss it.'

Usually, says Kapeliouk, the Palestinian prisoners refuse to give such undertakings but in this case the major consideration was to save the life of Nader al-Afuri and, besides, he was unable to engage in any independent activities.

Under this threat of appeal to the Supreme Court, the matter was re-examined by the military authorities and, eventually, they decided to release Nader al-Afuri and in February, 1980, the unfortunate young man was finally permitted to be transferred to the mental hospital at Daheisha.

Dr Kapeliouk adds that it is not just the issue of torture which is at stake in this case because that is a much too serious, painful and complicated subject to deal with while discussing the case of Nader al-Afuri and, therefore, it deserves to be dealt with separately. He has written: 'During our numerous tours in the West Bank we had heard too many horrific stories about torture, and we are not willing to treat them with total disbelief as do the Israeli Ministry of Law and of Interior Affairs when asked about the subject.'

In the affair of Nader al-Afuri, he continues, torture is not the main issue but even if one leaves that question open and even if one accepts the version of the military authorities who deny torture, there are still some questions which require to be asked con-

cerning the inhuman treatment of a prisoner who had lost his sanity.

Dr Kapeliouk has concluded: 'The Jerusalem Arab press reports more and more frequently the deterioration in conditions for Arab prisoners in Israeli prisons, hunger strikes, protests of families, unbearable conditions in the cold of winter, improper nourishment, etc . . .'

On 30 May, 1980, Dr Kapeliouk wrote an article on 'the new desert prison of Nafha' in which he wrote that the idea seemed to be to turn Nafha into the main prison for Palestinians who are suspected of 'leadership' of their people.

Jewish prisoners in Israel have adequate food and access to books, newspapers and the radio: these rights are denied to Palestinian political prisoners who are allowed neither underwear nor pyjamas. In some prisons, medical treatment is non-existent with one single aspirin tablet being the sole medicine given for almost any illness. There is no lavatory paper and neither this nor underwear may be used, even if they are provided by the families of the prisoners.

After visiting Nafha prison, which is surrounded by barbed wire fences, and has numerous ferocious guard dogs which bark all night, lawyers Leah Tsemel and Walid al-Fahoum called a press conference to publicise what they had seen there. The cells measure three metres by six metres and they are extremely overcrowded with low ceilings and small windows. Ten mattresses lie on the floor of each cell and the prisoners have to spend twenty-three hours a day in their cells. 'I have not got two inches of privacy,' complained Abdul Aziz Ali Shahin, who has spent the last twelve years of his life in various Israeli prisons. Even the deputy director of Nafha admitted that 'overcrowding here is terrible.'

Food is bad and it has to be eaten off the floor, and all forms of sport and gymnastics are forbidden to the

prisoners whose only exercise is half an hour's walk twice a day in a small concrete yard.

A number of prisoners suffer from heart ailments, but there is no doctor at the jail, and the area where the prison is situated is very exposed. There are frequent sand storms and the food is often mixed with sand and the prisoners' eyes burn. At night, it is extremely cold and during the day it becomes intolerably hot, especially inside the cells. There is very little ventilation anyway, but often the windows are closed as a form of 'punishment'.

According to the lawyers who defend 'security' prisoners, family visits to the prisons are a nightmare. Once a month, families make the journey to the prisons where they are allowed to see their jailed relatives only through two thick wire-nets which make everything look blurred.

One of the Palestinian prisoners in Nafha said: 'Since 1967, we have fought for improvement in prison conditions. We have gone on hunger strike and we have suffered punishment in solitary confinement, suspension of visits and many other deprivations until gradually we obtained certain basic rights. Now, we are again being deprived of them. At Nafha, we have to start all over again.'

Amnon Kapeliouk wrote that the prisoners were asking for proper beds instead of having to lie on a floor which was crawling with insects and reptiles, on thin mattresses. They wanted tables to eat and write on and an end to the terrible congestion inside the cells which should house four people instead of ten. They wanted washing facilities, permission to exercise, the provision of lavatory paper, shaving equipment, a mirror, books, newspapers, a change of clothing, and the right to listen to the radio and to buy staples at the canteen.

The prisoners expressed their bitterness at the conditions in Nafha which are, they say, inhuman.

'They have imprisoned our bodies, but they cannot break our spirit. In the present circumstances, we have nothing to lose,' they say.

When relatives of the prisoners at Nafha visited them for the first time, after a bus journey that lasted many hours, they returned, having spent only a short time with their loved ones, shocked at the harsh conditions prevailing in the prison.

Twenty-six prisoners who had been on hunger-strike at Nafha prison for nine days and were demanding better conditions were transferred to Ramleh jail. When they arrived there, they were made to stand in a line and, according to a statement made by five of them to their lawyer, Mrs Leah Tsemel, who was allowed to see them in the presence of guards, they were beaten up.

The prisoners were brought in with their hands and feet shackled and they were barely capable of speaking because they were so weak. Yacoub Duwana from Nablus, who has been in prison for the last thirteen years, said he had been kicked in the genitals. He told the lawyer, crying: 'I am not crying because they hit me but because they humiliated me. A prison warden trampled all over me and put his shoe in my mouth.'

Two of the prisoners died and, on 27 August, 1980, Yossi Hyman reported in *Haolam Hazeh* (a journal published by Uri Avnery, a member of the Knesset): 'The death of two Arab hunger striker prisoners following an attempt to force feed them is still a mystery. The autopsy shows that the cause of death was liquid which entered the lungs, but the prison authorities have still not explained how it happened.' However, a Jewish prisoner, who had been serving a term of imprisonment for embezzlement from his firm, was in the hospital at Ramleh prison because of an ulcer when the prisoners from Nafha were brought in and he witnessed the treatment they received.

On 8 August, the man, Yoseph Frankel, was released

and he called voluntarily at the offices of *Haolam Haze*h to give his testimony. He said that while he was in Ramleh prison, twenty-six prisoners were transferred there from Nafha. One day, he went to the hospital for treatment and he heard screaming coming from one of the rooms. The door of the room was open and he went over, hid behind the door and looked in.

Frankel testified that he saw three of the Arab prisoners from Nafha sitting on the floor. He said: 'They were tied up like bananas: hands tied behind the back, legs tied at the ankles and a short chain tied the hands to the legs from behind. Six or seven warders stood around them and forced the prisoners to sit straight and they pushed tubes into their mouths. The Arab prisoners screamed, but the jailers forced them to open their mouths and pushed in the tubes. One of the warders suddenly lifted a canister of tear gas and sprayed the prisoners. They began to vomit. I could also see that they were spitting blood all the time. The jailers treated the prisoners like animals. They maltreated them so much that, in the end, they managed to force the tubes into their mouths.'

He added: 'All this seemed to me like the stories of what the Gestapo did during the Nazi era. I felt very bad. My first impulse was to go in and stop all this, but there were six or seven of them and I was alone. They were jailers and I was a prisoner with no rights. The time for my release was near and so I decided to publicise what I had seen as soon as I was freed. While I was in prison, I noticed that Arab security prisoners were always treated worse than Jews. If the prisoners on hunger strike had been Jewish, I am sure they would not have been treated in this way. My only aim is to let people know what really happened . . .'

On 8 August, 1980, Dr Kapeliouk wrote that when he had written his previous article about Nafha, he did not know then how serious the situation was there.

For example, he said, Tawfiq Abu Zaheira, an agro-

nomist by profession, had been released from Nafha the previous week after serving a sentence of eighteen months' imprisonment in various Israeli jails, charged solely with the 'crime' of 'giving shelter to a member of a hostile organisation.' When he was transferred to Nafha, he became aware that 'it was a prison built in order to break the spirit of the prisoners,' with unbelievably harsh conditions.

A week later, on 15 August, 1980, Ezra Rivlis wrote, in *Al Hamishmar*: 'The mass murderers who inhabit Nafha prison in the Negev and who are being punished for their Nazi crimes against the State of the Jews have serious complaints against the prison authorities: they are not being treated with the justice and humanity they deserve.' He referred to the 'massacre' on the Tel Aviv coastal road by 'the Nazi murderers' and added: 'The Jewish victims did not die for something they had done but only because they were Jews.' He then demanded that the prisoners in Nafha should be punished by the State of Israel in the same way as it punished 'the chief murderer Adolf Eichmann.'

Amnon Kapeliouk replied to this slanderous and shocking article in the 22 August edition of *Al Hamishmar*, saying: 'The actual meaning of Rivlis's article is that permission should be granted to kill the security prisoners. For him they are all Nazis . . . but Ezra Rivlis has no knowledge of the subject. Out of about three thousand Palestinian prisoners sentenced by the military courts for harming the security of the state, the majority were imprisoned for "membership in a hostile organisation" and only a minority for acts of violence.'

The Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights and the prisoners' families demonstrated at the British Consulate and at the International Red Cross in East Jerusalem, and placards were displayed which said: 'Close the Nafha liquidation camp.'

For two hours, the demonstrators made speeches in Arabic, Hebrew and English through loudspeakers, calling for improvements in prison conditions for Palestinian prisoners, and they also carried placards demanding that those responsible for the deaths of two of the Nafha hunger-strikers should be put on trial and there should be an end to the assaults on hunger-strikers in Nafha.

A message from the mayor of Nablus was read out during the demonstration. In it, Mr Bassam Shak'a called upon democratic Israelis and world public opinion to help in putting an end to the crimes committed inside Nafha jail. He also called for the closure of the prison 'and the granting of the demands made by the Palestinian political prisoners.' He said that the Palestinian prisoners were suffering from maltreatment and oppression as part of the Israeli authorities' actions against the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.

The police dispersed demonstrators who had gathered outside the Red Cross offices and several arrests were made. On 28 July, 1980, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* reported that: 'The condition of the security prisoner still in the Assaf Ha'rofeh hospital yesterday took a turn for the worse. He is one of the three hunger-strikers who were transferred to the hospital last week after contracting pneumonia. The death of his two friends last week sparked off demonstrations and unrest in East Jerusalem. While the two other security prisoners had not been inhabitants of Jerusalem, the third is from East Jerusalem and his family took part in the demonstration. His lungs appear to be collapsing and his life is now in danger.'

The report added that the hunger-strikers' lawyer, Mrs Felicia Langer, had sent a letter to the Minister of the Interior and to the committee set up to investigate the deaths. In her letter, Mrs Langer wrote that she was prepared to testify under oath that she had seen

the signs of beatings on the bodies of three inmates.

At a news conference, Anwar Nusseibeh, former Jordanian Defence Minister and an East Jerusalem lawyer, said that a person on hunger strike for ten days was not likely to die of pneumonia and that the deaths may have occurred as a result of fluids entering the lungs while the prisoners were undergoing forced-feeding. (It had been reported that the fluid which was forcibly administered to the prisoners was salt water.) Referring to the news conference, the *International Herald Tribune* reported that: 'Mr Nusseibeh has a first cousin serving three life sentences at Nafha.'

Because the biased Western media invariably refer to security prisoners as 'terrorists', there are many misconceptions in Western public opinion about the nature of the 'offences' which have been committed by the Palestinians in Israeli jails. Only a very small percentage have actually been convicted of acts of violence and, as has already been explained, many of these convictions are obtained solely on the evidence of the confessions of the accused which, according to innumerable Israeli press reports, have been obtained by torture. On 8 August, 1980, the Israeli Reserve General Matityahu Peled wrote an article in *Ha'aretz* which gave facts that have never been revealed by the Western media. He wrote, for example, that since the beginning of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, about 200,000 security prisoners and detainees had passed through Israeli jails. This figure equals nearly twenty per cent of all the inhabitants of the occupied territories. Considering the percentage of young children and old people among the Palestinian population, the figure of twenty per cent is a horrifying one because it means that virtually the entire able-bodied Palestinian population has spent some time under detention. General Peled continued that the average number of

prison inmates at any given moment is about three thousand.

This, he says, has led to 'horrendous' overcrowding inside the prisons and 'appalling' human suffering. A large number of prisoners, he points out, have not been sentenced for any criminal offence 'but merely for belonging to a hostile organisation.'

He adds: 'The offence of "membership" is frequently committed unintentionally by the defendant. Young people from the [occupied] territories, for example, who study in an Arab country have to register with a Palestinian organisation. By doing so, they commit an offence for which they will be tried when they return at the end of their studies or for a holiday. It is well known that a youngster who is given permission to study abroad will find his or her name on the membership list of some Palestinian organisation, as this is the custom in the Arab States. For this offence, they can be sentenced to several years in jail, but it is clear that the suffering caused to them and their families is entirely pointless. It only increases the number of security prisoners, while not benefiting Israel's security. In fact, it might harm it.'

General Peled adds that even 'membership' of an organisation in the occupied territories 'is no more than a form of political protest' and he goes on to say: 'There is a further, and very important, aspect of the problem, which we must not hesitate to confront. Many of us remember how the Jewish underground fighters refused to be tried by military courts of the British Mandate.'

He writes that: 'They demanded to be considered prisoners-of-war and not criminals. Few Israelis are keen on this comparison,' and he goes on to say that even those Palestinians who have been guilty of acts of violence have acted out of patriotic motives. He adds: 'When looking at their families who are demonstrating and fasting in solidarity with them, one cannot but

notice that their social origins are really no different from those of the old Jewish underground fighters in Eretz [the land of] Israel.'

Of course, the difference between the two cases is that, today, the Palestinians are fighting for restitution of their inalienable rights whereas the Zionist underground fighters were struggling to take over the homeland of another people. Nevertheless, although the Palestinians have right and justice on their side and the Zionists have never had any such justifications, the Palestinian case has been so distorted that Israel considers — and tries to persuade the world that this is the case — that the Palestinians not only have no right to wage a struggle but they are not even entitled to defend themselves against acts of brutality and aggression.

General Peled continues: 'The struggle between Israel and the Palestinians is at its height, and so is the struggle for a solution. It will not be found within prison walls, but most probably by the United Nations. And when the struggle is over, the prisoners will be freed, and nothing will be able to prevent their people from seeing them as heroes although everything was done to present them as criminals.'

A Negative View

Much of the current barbaric treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli authorities stems from the Zionist attitude towards non-Jews and especially towards Palestinian Arabs. They are spoken of in a derogatory and insulting way and there is an extreme insensitivity to their feelings. The most enormous efforts are made not to offend Jewish susceptibilities and to glorify and ennoble Jewish deeds and to cover up Jewish misdeeds, but all Arab actions, aspirations and achievements are scorned and belittled.

It was not long after their election that Bassam Shak'a and the other Arab mayors became aware that, in addition to fighting injustice, cruelty, oppression and gross violations of human and civil rights, they would also have to endure being ruled over by people who treated them with unconcealed scorn and contempt.

To celebrate its anniversaries, Israel has held inflammatory military parades. The so-called 're-unification' of Jerusalem was marked, on the thirty-second anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, by ostentatious, blatantly provocative rejoicing. 'They danced on the graves of Palestinians,' said Bassam Shak'a.

The Israeli attitude towards Palestinians is well illustrated by the statement in the House of Commons in London by a British member of parliament, Mr R.J. Maxwell-Hyslop (House of Commons, 18 October, 1973. Hansard, col. 502) that, six weeks after the 1967 war, he was a member of a party of six British members of parliament who visited Israel. The visitors were guests of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Knesset (Israeli parliament).

After lunch, Russian-born David Hacoheh, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Knesset, spoke, said Mr Maxwell-Hyslop, 'with great intemperance and at great length to us about the Arabs.' When he stopped for breath, Mr Maxwell-

Hyslop told him that he was 'profoundly shocked' that David Hacohen 'should speak of other human beings in terms similar to those in which Julius Streicher spoke of the Jews. Have you learned nothing?' he asked. The M.P. went on, 'I shall remember his reply to my dying day. He smote the table with both hands and said, "But they are not human beings, they are not people, they are Arabs."' He was speaking of the Arab refugees.'

On 28 November, 1975, the PLO representative in London, Said Hammami (who was subsequently murdered), made reference, in an article in *The Times*, to Mr Maxwell-Hyslop's remarks. David Hacohen then wrote to *The Times* denying that he had made such remarks and adding: 'It is worth noting that Mr Maxwell-Hyslop made his defamatory remarks no less than six years after I was supposed to have uttered them.'

Mr Maxwell-Hyslop's reply, which was published in *The Times*, reaffirmed the truth of his statement. In fact, he wrote, he was so appalled at what David Hacohen was saying that he wrote down the exact words on the back of a cigarette packet at the time when they were being spoken and, ever since then, the cigarette packet had been lodged for safe keeping in his bank. There was no further utterance from David Hacohen.

Professor Israel Shahak has spoken of 'the Jewish racism which causes oppression of and discrimination towards Palestinian citizens of Israel in every aspect of their lives.' The situation of the Palestinians of the occupied territories is, of course, infinitely worse.

Dor Hemshech, which is the youth movement of the World Zionist Organisation with its headquarters in Jerusalem, published an article in its journal at the beginning of 1980. Written by Rabbi Isaac J. Bernstein of Manhattan's Jewish Centre, who is also an executive member of the Rabbinical Council of

America and a lecturer in Talmud at Stern College, the article said: 'The principle of Kibbush Milchama, Conquest by War, most definitely indicates that territories seized during the Six Day War are most definitely now under Israeli ownership. That the Arabs in those territories have been allowed to remain in possession of their homes and lands does not negate the possibility, at some future date, of dispossessing them.' He adds that there is no such thing as 'occupied territories' or 'annexed territories' because 'as long as the war which initiated the conquest was conducted under instructions from the Israeli government, all territories captured as a result of this war belong to Israel.'

The rabbi, an American Jew living in the United States, continues: 'Since the territories are part of Israel proper and are now fully ours, are we allowed to surrender them as part of a peace treaty or does Jewish law forbid us to part with one inch of holy soil, despite the consequences?' He replies to his own question that 'the positive commandment to live in Israel embraces not only settling the land but also not allowing any part of Israel to remain in non-Jewish hands.'

There are innumerable examples of the appalling racism which exists in Israel and the occupied territories. It has been the habit of Israeli Prime Ministers to send a letter each year on the anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel to schoolchildren. These letters have always commenced: 'Dear Israeli child', but Menachem Begin changed the wording to 'Dear Jewish child'.

In an article in *Ha'aretz*, Hada Boshes, a television and radio commentator, praised the journalist Mrs Ora Shem Tov, who had appeared on television calling for the expulsion of all Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories. Hada Boshes expressed sorrow that Mrs Shem Tov had not yet found some method of expelling all the Arabs.

David Shifman, the deputy mayor of Tel Aviv, said on Israeli radio that all Arabs should be expelled from the country and Greek and Turkish workers imported to replace them. He said that Turks and Greeks are not as dark-skinned as Arabs 'and as is well-known, workers with a lighter-coloured skin work better.' Not one of his thirty-one colleagues in the Tel Aviv municipal council uttered one word of condemnation or dissociated themselves from these remarks. One can only conjecture about what would have happened to an Arab mayor if he had made similar comments about Jews. It is, however, quite common for various Israeli personalities to appear on Israeli radio or television and to make shockingly offensive anti-Arab remarks.

On 28 August, 1980, *Yediot Aharonot* quoted the deputy chairman of the Israeli hotel owners' federation, Mr Avi-Natan, as saying that 'the Arabs from the [occupied] territories have conquered all the unskilled sectors, such as dish-washing, cleaning, etc.' He added that hotel work is non-stop and involves weekends, public holidays and shifts and, therefore, it is suitable for Arabs but not for Jews because 'Israelis like to work regular hours and to sit in offices. They want time to enjoy themselves . . .'

Israel does not have a Constitution and does not seem to intend to have one. There are also no laws against discrimination which is operated with the support of all Zionist parties from left to right. The kibbutz movement, which is racist in itself because it limits membership to Jews, also supports such discrimination.

The racist nature of the State becomes apparent when one learns that, in order to deprive poor Arab families of family allowances, a system has been devised whereby these are only paid to the children of 'veterans'. This word was used to appeal to Jewish public opinion in the United States and seems to imply

that the benefits are paid to the offspring of soldiers. In fact, new immigrants from the United States or the Soviet Union receive more benefits than former soldiers. Because Arabs do not serve in the Israeli army, the Israelis found that this was the one way in which they could be sure that no benefits would be paid to Arabs (and this includes Arab citizens of Israel). The law says that benefits will be paid for a child whose parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, great uncles, cousins and second cousins have served not only in the Israeli army but in any and every 'Jewish organisation of resistance' anywhere in the world. No proof is ever demanded of such service having taken place and, therefore, any Jewish family arriving from the Soviet Union is considered to be a 'veteran' family and will receive benefits which are denied to Palestinian children.

Further evidence of the Israeli attitude to Arabs is provided by an article written on 7 February, 1979 in *Ma'ariv* by David Hacohen who, as has already been described, does not consider Arabs to be human beings. The article told of how a Danish friend of Mr Hacohen had asked him several years previously not to destroy the houses of Arabs in the occupied territories because, when Danish friends of Israel saw such actions on television, they were reminded of the 'collective punishments' which were inflicted on the people of Denmark during the Nazi occupation.

Hacohen said he had referred to the matter because, after a long interval, houses were again being destroyed (demolitions ceased after the Sadat visit to Israel and were recommenced a year later). He also wrote: 'The houses have been used by terrorists whose guilt is in no doubt.' Commenting on this statement, Professor Israel Shahak says: 'Both lies. Most of the houses are destroyed before any trial and often even before a formal charge is submitted. Secondly, the military authorities usually destroy the biggest house

belonging to the family, chosen arbitrarily.'

What is significant is that Hacothen did not call for an end to the demolitions because of the extent of human misery which they caused. He only asked that they should not be shown on television for 'what is the point in showing such things on television and allowing them to be seen throughout the world and causing reactions such as those in Denmark?'

Professor Shahak says that now the last traces of pretence that there is any kind of legal regime in the occupied territories have ceased. The Israeli government now openly and officially demonstrates that the Palestinians in the occupied territories are to be treated by completely different legal rules from Jews, and there is 'an open and public demand for a total expulsion of all Arabs from all Palestine, supported by many in the press and by almost the entire Jewish religious establishment.'

It should, however, be recognised that the Zionist desire to rid Palestine of its Arab inhabitants has existed for many years. Indeed, Professor Shahak says: 'It is one of the greatest Palestinian mistakes to concentrate on Deir Yassin almost exclusively. In fact, there were hundreds of Deir Yassins', and he describes one of the many examples given by *Davar*, the newspaper of the Israeli Labour Party, which writes of the 'ghetto mentality' of the Zionists in dealing with what they called 'the Arab question'.

This account (on 4 April, 1979) describes a letter on the subject of the custom of the Israeli army 'to conquer everything except its own lusts.' (The Israelis claim that their soldiers do not rape women, but this is untrue for there have been many rapes. The Israelis, however, invariably kill their victims afterwards.)

A soldier who was an eye-witness of events at the Arab village of Doeima, the day after it was occupied in 1948 (the letter was dated 8 November) by Brigade Eighty-Nine, was quoted as saying: 'They had killed

between eighty and one hundred Arab men, women and children. They killed the children by crushing their skulls with sticks. There was not one house without corpses in it. Arab survivors of the first attack were put into houses without food or water. Then the sappers came to blow up the houses. One commander ordered a sapper to put two old women into a house he was about to blow up. The sapper refused and said he would take orders only from his own officer. So the commander ordered his soldiers to put the old women into the house and they did so. Another soldier boasted that he had raped an Arab woman and had then shot her. They made another Arab woman, who had a baby, clean the yard . . . she worked for a couple of days and then they shot her and her baby . . . this was not during the heat of battle but was practised as a system of expulsion and of elimination. The fewer Arabs left the better . . .'

A similar atrocity occurred at the Palestinian village of Qibya in October, 1953 when sixty-six men, women and children were massacred. A United Nations observer described how 'Bullet-ridden bodies near the doorways and multiple bullet hits on the doors of the demolished houses indicated that the inhabitants had been forced to remain inside until their homes were blown up over them . . . Israeli soldiers moved about in the village blowing up buildings, firing into doorways and windows with automatic weapons and throwing hand grenades.'

Unit 101 which carried out the massacre went unpunished and its most famous member, who is looked upon as a hero in Israel, was Meir Har Zion, a murderer who gloatingly describes how he enjoys killing unarmed Arabs. Once he and his comrades crossed the frontier into Jordan, seized six Arab shepherds, killed five of them with a knife as the others watched and left the sixth alive 'so that he could tell the story . . .'

The practice of failing to punish Jews for the most bestial crimes against Palestinians continues to the present day, and the Israeli attitude is well illustrated by the case of Kafr Qasim, a Palestinian village which had a curfew imposed on it in October, 1956, but the inhabitants, who were working in the fields at the time, knew nothing of the curfew. As they returned home from their work, they were shot in cold blood by Israeli troops who killed forty-seven men, women and children.

Later, *Ha'aretz* reported that 'the eleven officers and soldiers who are on trial for the massacre in Kafr Qasim have all received a fifty per cent increase in their salaries.

'A special messenger was sent to Jerusalem to bring the cheques to the accused in time for Passover. A number of the accused have been given a vacation for the holiday . . . The accused mingle freely with the spectators; the officers smile at them and pat them on the back; some of them shake hands with them. It is obvious that these people, whether they will be found innocent or guilty, are not treated as criminals but as heroes.' The officers responsible for the crime, Melinki and Dahan, were supposed to be sentenced to fifteen and seventeen years' imprisonment respectively but, within a year, both were freed. (When Kafr Qasim is mentioned in the Western press, Zionist propagandists invariably write and refer to the original sentences imposed on the prisoners as examples of Israeli 'even-handedness' but they never mention that the prisoners were released in a year: letters pointing out what actually happened are never published.)

Brigadier Shadmi, who had given the order for the massacre and who had said, in reply to a query about what should be done with anyone coming home in ignorance of the curfew, 'I want no sentimentality . . .', was found guilty by a Special Military Court of a mere 'technical error' and he was fined one piastre. Nine

months after his release from prison, Lieutenant Gavriel Dahan, who had been found guilty of killing forty-three Arabs in one hour, was appointed 'officer responsible for Arab affairs' in the town of Ramleh.

The Palestinians repeatedly emphasise that they have no feelings of hatred towards Jews as Jews but only towards those Zionist Jews who have stolen their country. The majority of Jews, on the other hand, display feelings of hatred and contempt for all Arabs: most allow the Zionists to speak in their name and, by their absolute refusal to condemn the anti-Arab racialism of the Zionists, they appear to condone it.

There have been many examples of such racialism and some of these resulted in the occurrences which rendered Bassam Shak'a a hero of our times.

In 1974, the Israeli Army Rabbinate issued an official bulletin which explicitly called for the killing of civilians in time of war because 'Arabs are not to be trusted', and on 2 January, 1979, *Ha'aretz* quoted the Grand Rabbi Mordechai Savitsky, one of the greatest authorities on Jewish religious law in the United States, who said that 'it is absolutely forbidden to return the liberated territories to non-Jews', and 'according to the Jewish religion, one should never trust a non-Jew . . .'

Ma'ariv's supplement, on 22 January, 1979, cited Israel's murderer hero Meir Har Zion as having said: 'A situation must be created in which it will not be worthwhile for Arabs to live here. They should live in Saudi Arabia or Jordan . . .' Then, the commander of the Israeli army northern command, General Avigdor Ben Gal, was widely quoted by the Israeli press as having referred to the Arabs as 'a cancer'.

Jews throughout the world would have been outraged if such a word had been used to describe Jews, but the Jews in Israel remained strangely silent about this description of Arabs. In fact, the General was talking of the Arabs of Galilee who are, of course,

Israeli citizens.

On 20 February, 1978, *Yediot Aharonot* reported that Shmuel Toledano, an Arab Jewish member of the Knesset, had received a letter from an official in the Ministry of Health who wrote: 'I hope that when we begin to slaughter your Arab brothers, we will deal first of all with scoundrels like you . . . I understand your anti-Zionist views now because your past is Arab too . . .' Not one Israeli official or individual or organisation (with the exception of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights) uttered one word of condemnation when Mr Toledano publicised the matter.

Double Standards

Given the prevailing and general Israeli attitude towards Palestinians, it is not surprising that the atrocities on the West Bank increased in scope and severity as time went on.

Because the Israeli authorities were worried about the drop in immigration figures of European Jews (both David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir had declared that they wanted Israel to be a 'European Jewish State' and not a 'Levantine' one) and because many Soviet Jews were settling in the United States rather than in Israel, efforts were made to attract settlers from the United States.

As there has been a great movement towards religion in the U.S., with many young people becoming 'born again' Christians, this trend was encouraged among young Jews from non-practising Jewish families. 'Emissaries' were sent to schools and colleges to 'convert' them. A large number were social misfits who were easily convinced that Israel was 'the promised land' which could be conquered by following the teachings of Gush Emunim (Block of the Faithful), an extreme right-wing unashamedly racist, expansionist organisation.

The zealots of Gush Emunim began establishing settlements in wholly Arab areas on the West Bank and terrorising the Palestinians living there. As Menachem Begin shared the views of the settlers (and, indeed, his government had been carrying out a vast programme of building settlements all over the West Bank), Gush Emunim was protected and assisted by the authorities.

Practically all Israel's adult male Jewish population is serving, or has served, in the army or is in the reserve and, therefore, they all have access to weapons. All the settlers on the West Bank (including the women members of Gush Emunim) carry guns which they constantly use to threaten and intimidate the Palestinians who are frequently stopped in the street by armed settlers who treat them with arrogance

and contempt. The Palestinians are asked for their papers (although the settlers have no authority), searched, sometimes ordered to strip naked (in order to humiliate them) and often beaten up for no reason.

The Israeli press has reported hundreds of unprovoked attacks on Palestinians by armed settlers who often break into Arab homes and beat up the occupants and smash up the contents while loudly calling on the Arabs to leave the West Bank. On 20 April, 1977, however, it was uniformed troops and not settlers who broke into Palestinian houses in Nablus and forced the residents to clean the streets. Some were made to stand outside their houses with one arm and one leg raised.

Nevertheless, on the same day nine members of Israel's Black Panther (Sephardi Jewish) movement visited the mayor and council of Nablus to express their solidarity with the people of the West Bank. They were welcomed by Bassam Shak'a at a special meeting of the council and given a sprig of olive as a symbol of the mutual wish for peace. Shortly beforehand, the mayor had refused to meet Rabbi Meir Kahana, the Arab-hating, extremely right-wing, fanatically nationalist leader of the Kach group who had arrived in Nablus with three armed supporters and made a speech in Hebrew demanding the settlement of Jews in Nablus. At the same time, it was reported that demonstrations against the occupation and against the ill-treatment of political prisoners had continued in Nablus throughout the month.

The Palestinians are not only savagely punished for such demonstrations but also for stone-throwing by small children whom, according to Amnon Kapeliouk, 'no one can control'. However, innocent communities — sometimes thousands of people — suffer for their acts. For instance, after some children had thrown stones at an Israeli military vehicle near the Daheisha refugee camp near Bethlehem, the camp was surroun-

ded at night and loudspeakers called on all the inhabitants between the ages of fourteen and sixty-five, male and female, to gather in the schoolyard.

Soldiers searched the houses and beat up people they found in them. The entire population was kept in the yard in the bitter cold and pouring rain (this was on 26 December, 1979) and they were forced to stand under the gutters from which the rain was gushing. They were not released until the military governor arrived at noon the next day and, as they had been standing since midnight, this meant that their ordeal had lasted for twelve hours. The military governor said that similar punishments would be inflicted each time the children threw stones at Israeli vehicles.

One young man who had just been married and had no children, Ahmad Abbas, asked why he was being arrested and the soldiers responded by beating him up in front of his wife and smashing all the furniture in their house.

This was by no means the first such act in the area. On 21 March, 1978, in 'retaliation' for demonstrations which they believed the pupils of Iskandar Khouri High School in the village of Beit Jala had held in protest against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the soldiers had ordered the children to close their classroom doors and windows. The troops had then hurled tear gas bombs into the rooms, causing such pain and panic among the children that many of them jumped from the windows on to the ground eighteen feet below and seven of them sustained fractured legs.

When President Carter visited Israel, there were student demonstrations on the West Bank. Armed Israeli settlers and troops retaliated with ferocity and, in Ramallah, seven girls and two schoolboys were injured and Naif Salehan was shot in the leg. Shooting also took place at Bir Zeit where three students and one schoolboy were shot by the troops and taken to hospital. The military authorities closed two schools at

Bethlehem and Halhul; and at Beit Sahur, some schoolgirls were arrested. Then, the military governor of the West Bank, General Ben Eliezar, warned the heads of schools and universities that these would be closed if there were further disturbances.

On 11 March, 1979, Israeli troops entered the classrooms of the secondary school in Ramallah and arrested dozens of pupils, claiming that they had taken part in demonstrations although both pupils and teachers protested that they knew nothing of the demonstrations as the children had been in the classrooms at the time they were alleged to have taken place.

Both children and teachers were beaten up by the Israeli troops who then locked up eighteen of the children in a shack in the courtyard of the compound of the military governor in Ramallah. The shack (a former stable) was full of holes in the walls and roof which let in the cold wind and rain. There was no floor and the youngsters had to sleep on the bare earth. They had no outdoor clothing with them and were very cold but although their parents begged the soldiers to allow them to give their children some warm garments, the soldiers refused. On 15 March, the troops were still refusing to allow warm clothing to be given to the youngsters and they also denied them access to a lawyer.

Nevertheless, Bassam Shak'a makes the point that 'as the Israeli cruelty increased, we became tougher. Anyway, by that time, it seemed as if we had nothing to lose.'

Menachem Begin repeatedly calls on world public opinion to condemn and ostracise the entire Palestinian people because of the occasional acts of desperation of an extremely small minority, but he expects the criminal acts of the Zionists to be overlooked and condoned because they are carried out 'in the Jewish interest'. It is largely as a result of the

principled stance of Palestinian leaders like the mayor of Nablus in the face of monstrous injustice and oppression that the world is, at last, becoming aware of some of the facts and is, perhaps, looking at Zionism with new eyes.

Even the usually biased Western press reacted with horror to the news that the Israeli authorities had 'banished' two Palestinian families, one from Nablus and the other from Beit Sahur, to 'internal exile' in the wilderness south of Jericho, a desert area of intense heat, where they were dumped without proper shelter or any amenities, a prey to wild animals, lizards and scorpions. Their 'crimes'? It was alleged that their teenage sons had attacked Israeli vehicles although this allegation was denied. In fact, Tariq Shumali, the boy from Beit Sahur, was alleged to have thrown stones while riding a bicycle. He was removed to hospital with serious injuries after having been severely beaten (an accusation which, said a *Guardian* report, army sources privately admitted to be true).

After world-wide protests and hunger-strikes by the banished Palestinians, they were allowed to return to their homes.

In view of the 'punishments' meted out to Palestinians after their children have held peaceful demonstrations (these are forbidden in the West Bank) or are alleged to have thrown stones at vehicles, it becomes clear that every Palestinian act of resistance will bring down severe retribution on many innocent people while acts of violence, even if committed by only one individual, will bring about savage 'punishment' for whole communities.

Thus, when shopkeepers closed their shops as a sign of protest against the 'autonomy' proposals, they were forced at gun-point to reopen them so that tourists would not be aware of any trouble. 'Not only that,' said Shak'a, 'but they were rounded up and made to stand for many hours in the open as a further

“punishment”.’

The town of Bethlehem was ‘punished’ by having all its telephones cut off for six weeks; and schools and colleges are repeatedly closed whenever there is any student ‘unrest’ so that much valuable education is lost. Often — and the Palestinians say that this is a deliberate policy — the closures take place at the time of the end-of-year examinations so that a year’s education will be lost. There are many other difficulties, such as the strict censorship of Arabic books. Poems about Arab valour and attainment are prohibited, as are all written works bearing such words as ‘brave’, ‘noble’ or ‘honourable’ in respect of Arabs. Young people grow up with no knowledge of the treasures of Arabic literature because all patriotic or nationalist writing is banned, and only turgid poems about flowers or butterflies are permitted.

In 1978, 319 books in Arabic were totally banned in the occupied territories (since then, a further large number of books has been banned) but no list of these was issued to librarians or book-sellers. These books cannot be imported, printed or stocked in public libraries. The works concerned are officially said to be on art, history, teaching, geography and something referred to by the censors as ‘thought’ which might mean philosophy.

Some of the books were said to be ‘anti-semitic’ but the Zionist definition of this term may, perhaps, be grasped with the knowledge that, in September, 1980, Zionist protests were made to a large British publisher about an ‘anti-semitic’ school text-book and there were demands for its withdrawal because of one passage which stated that in 1948 the Palestinians had been forced to flee from their country.

Many students have been placed under house-arrest or summarily deported, and a large number have been injured, and in some cases killed, by armed settlers. *Davar* reported, for instance, on 16 March,

1979 that a 24-year-old student, Nasri Hassan al-Anani, and a 16-year-old schoolgirl, Rawa al-Shalada, were shot dead after hundreds of Palestinian students gathered in the main street of Halhul and blocked the road. An Israeli car was hit by stones. The report added: 'The men in the car were from Kiryat Arba [the Jewish settlement built on expropriated Palestinian land at Hebron] and they were armed.' In addition to the two who were killed, another Palestinian youngster was wounded in the leg.

An enquiry revealed that one of the Palestinians was shot dead 'by an Israeli soldier and the other by a civilian whose car had been pelted with stones . . . A soldier has confessed to the shooting . . .' (*Guardian*, 4 July, 1979).

On 31 January, 1980, *Ma'ariv* reported that a corporal had been cleared by the military district court in the central command region of killing Nasri Hassan al-Anani. Although the soldier had confessed to the killing, the report added: 'When dismissing the case against him, the judges stated: "Throughout the trial, we have felt that it might not have been the defendant's bullet which killed the man".'

It was then reported by *Ha'aretz* on 3 February, 1980, that Ilan Tor, an inhabitant of Kiryat Arba, had been cleared of the murder of Rawa al-Shalada. The testimony of an eye-witness, Jabrin Shabwan, an inhabitant of Halhul, who had seen the murder, was not believed by the judges (this is a common occurrence in Israeli courts where Arab testimony is 'not believed because you cannot take the word of an Arab'). It was reported that the murderer 'was being protected because of his Gush Emunim connections.'

In spite of the fact that the man had already been found guilty by an enquiry and in spite of the damning evidence 'that he had sent his revolver to be tampered with after the incident, which made it impossible to identify the weapon he had fired' the report added that

'the judges ruled that this crime had indeed been committed by him, but added that after he had been cleared of the murder charge and after he had spent so much time in jail, they preferred not to convict him of that charge either.' (He was in prison for a few months in very good conditions.)

It was revealed in Israel in 1979 that the Israeli army does not take prisoners simply because it makes a habit of killing its opponents, even when there is no fighting in progress.

During the invasion of Lebanon which was carried out as a 'reprisal' for the Palestinian guerrilla attack on the Tel Aviv coastal road, an Israeli officer, Lieutenant Daniel Pinto, carried out the murder, in cold blood, after the fighting had ceased, of four men. In a letter dated 15 October, 1979, to members of the Knesset, Uri Avnery, a Knesset member, wrote: 'In the foreign press as well as in the local media, a version of the affair was published which stated that Pinto perpetrated his crime as an "act of revenge" because his commander had been killed by a Fida'i. There is not a grain of truth in that. Pinto's commander was injured in the course of battle, and the deputy commander killed. But that *did not take place* in the village in which the crime was committed and the crime itself was carried out a long time afterwards, when the fighting was over. Furthermore, this claim was never raised in court.' One of the Lebanese murdered by Pinto was an Israeli army informer, and Pinto knew that. He murdered the man in order to prevent him from revealing what had taken place because he had witnessed the murder of the three others. Pinto's sentence was reduced from twelve to eight years' imprisonment and then it was further reduced to two years.

A similar case concerned Lieutenant Colonel Arie Sadeh, a member of the Israeli invasion force in Lebanon. *En route*, his unit encountered three Arabs

who showed no resistance; there was no fighting and no exchange of fire. In spite of this, Colonel Sadeh ordered his men to take the three men prisoner and, later, he ordered that one of the men should be murdered because 'he looked like a terrorist'. A sergeant who was opposed to the murder reported the incident and Sadeh was court-martialled. The lower military court sentenced Arieh Sadeh to two and a half years' imprisonment and demoted him to the rank of captain. The military prosecutor appealed against the leniency of the sentence and the Court of Appeal sentenced Sadeh to five years' imprisonment and demoted him to the rank of private. The Chief of Staff, General Rafael Eitan, reduced the sentence to two and a half years' imprisonment, minus one third and promoted him back to the rank of major. The other officers involved in the murder also had their sentences reduced by the Chief of Staff to one year each: he refused to reduce the sentences of the sergeant and corporal who were also involved and these were later reduced by Israel's president, Mr Navon, to nine months each. Sadeh's wife Yafa wrote a letter, which was widely publicised, revealing that the 'operation' was intended to be 'a revenge for the assault on the coast road' and that the commanders were told: 'We don't want any prisoners, just kill, kill, kill.' Neither the woman nor her husband expressed any regret for his action.

Uri Avnery wrote to members of the Knesset: 'The Chief of Staff reduced Sadeh's sentence AFTER the stormy public debates relating to the mitigation of the sentence of the war criminal, Pinto. This proves that the Chief of Staff sticks to his policy of mitigating the sentences of war criminals who have murdered Arabs.'

An Israeli soldier on sentry duty in Jerusalem who shot and killed an innocent Arab passer-by because he felt 'a sudden surge of anger against the Arabs' was

allowed home from prison every week-end while awaiting trial, and he was then sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

At the end of August, 1980, two Israeli soldiers convicted of stealing and storing arms and explosives in order to attack Arabs were sentenced to nineteen months' and thirteen months' imprisonment respectively. They had stolen 264 lbs of TNT, fuse wire, fifteen hand grenades, fourteen rifle grenades and ammunition, and they had hidden these weapons in a Jewish religious college in occupied East Jerusalem. At their trial, they admitted that they had intended to attack Arab targets in the West Bank.

Bearing in mind the fact that Arabs convicted of possession of even the smallest amounts of explosives are sentenced to life imprisonment, the *Jerusalem Post* asked: 'Are these sentences supposed to deter such crimes in the future? Are they meant to reflect a sense of even-handed military justice? Are they expected to promote co-existence in Eretz Israel?'

A Reign of Terror

The Palestinians in the West Bank have been, and are, suffering from every imaginable deprivation and hardship at the hands of both the settlers and the Israeli authorities which do nothing to discourage and, indeed, often support the extremist tactics of Gush Emunim. According to *The Times* of 7 July, 1978: 'Gush Emunim today announced plans for widespread Jewish settlement throughout the occupied West Bank, with Jews outnumbering Arabs there by the end of the century.' To achieve this aim, more and more land had to be — and was — expropriated from the Palestinians.

To add to the irony of the situation, the land is acquired by the Jewish National Fund which states in its Constitution that non-Jews may neither live nor work on this land. In some cases, however, Palestinians are employed as labourers (at a fraction of the wages paid to Jewish workers) on land which once belonged to them.

The Israelis have also stolen thousands of gallons of Palestinian water and diverted it to Israeli farms and settlements. The resultant shortage of water has had serious effects on Palestinian crops.

Some Arab farmers who attempted to resist the seizure of their land were confronted with a new tactic which succeeded in depriving them of their livelihood and ensuring that their land came into Jewish possession. As did the Americans in Vietnam, the Israelis flew over Palestinian land (both in Israel and the West Bank) and sprayed the crops with poison. Muhammad Milhelm, the mayor of Hebron, said that in one morning alone, the Israelis destroyed more than two hundred acres of Arab land on which crops of wheat and barley were growing. They also ruined large tracts of land which held olive groves where new trees take seven years to bear fruit. Altogether, thousands of acres were defoliated.

'They take our water and electricity for their settle-

ments and army camps,' Bassam Shak'a said, 'and although we badly need the money for these services which we supply, the Israelis deliberately keep us waiting for many months before paying us. We have to pay for oil and we have to pay our workers but they withhold payment deliberately so that they will weaken us financially. However, such actions only make the people more aware of the occupation and more determined than ever to struggle against it.'

He paused and then continued: 'It is only natural that people should struggle against tyranny. The Israelis came along one day and, without any warning, they blew up three houses in Nablus. Each family had ten members, among them old persons and young children, and they were all thrown into the street. Can such acts ever be justified? Part of the trouble in the past has been that there was what one might call a Western mind and an Eastern mind even though we are all human. The West has always liked the Zionists and disliked the Arabs, but I think things are changing now and there is more awareness of the justice of our cause. The West has caused many of its own problems by its attitude towards the Third World.'

As tensions increased, the 'punishments' became more severe. The West, and especially Jews throughout the world, remained silent about barbarous acts which would have caused an uproar if perpetrated by any people except the Israelis. On 2 July, 1979, the *Guardian* published a report headed 'Israel punishes Nablus for protest march' which stated that 'collective punishments' had been imposed on Nablus for a march held in protest at the establishment of a Jewish settlement at nearby Elon Moreh. The report added that the mayor, Mr Bassam Shak'a, and other leading figures had been threatened with prosecution for defying a ban on the march which had been dispersed with tear-gas and shots fired in the air.

The report (by Eric Silver) went on to say that the

mayor of Nablus and the mayors of five other towns in 'Samaria' as well as representatives of commercial, religious, trade union and professional bodies, had claimed that hundreds of Arabs had been rounded up for questioning, then released on bail to appear before a military tribunal.

The mayors said that Israel was refusing to allow students from Nablus to go abroad to sit entrance examinations for Arab universities. In this report, Eric Silver also referred to the fifteen Jewish women and thirty-five children, settlers from Kiryat Arba, squatting in a building in the middle of Hebron. The women, he added, 'are demanding a right to return to the town from which an ancient Jewish community was expelled in 1929 by an Arab pogrom'. Eric Silver, who has written in innumerable of his reports in the *Guardian* and *Observer* of the 'pogrom' of 1929, has never explained that far more Arabs were brutally murdered by Zionist settlers in various parts of Palestine than were killed in the attack in Hebron which took place as a result of the earlier attacks on Arabs. Another point is that settlers, most of whom were born in the United States, could hardly be said to be 'returning' to Hebron.

It was because of history repeating itself in Hebron that the repression became more severe. The inhabitants of the town were goaded beyond endurance by the settlers who behaved in a deliberately provocative fashion. The Qadi (Muslim judge) of Hebron (who was summarily deported, along with the mayors of Hebron and Halhul, without charge or trial in the spring of 1980) described how armed settlers and soldiers would enter the ancient mosque wearing heavy boots and thus deeply offending Muslim sensibilities, and they would seize Qurans and tear them up as well as smashing ancient and valuable ornaments and clocks. The settlers also rampaged through the town, carrying sub-machine guns and they would break into Palestinian

houses, smash the furniture and beat up the occupants, as well as smashing the windows of houses, cars and shops.

From being a totally Arab town, Hebron was invaded by foreign settlers who were not only alien to the inhabitants but had an extreme hatred of Arabs. It seemed inevitable that someone, goaded beyond endurance, should retaliate, although, according to Israeli law, only Jews are permitted to practise 'reprisals'. A settler from Denmark, Yehoshua Sloma, was killed in Hebron and Professor Israel Shahak has said: 'The description of the soldier Yehoshua Sloma's killing as a "murder" is, under Begin's government, hypocritical, and I regret that so many journalists employed this term. It was the declared aim of Begin's organisation "Etzel" (an underground Zionist terrorist gang before the establishment of the State of Israel) to attack and kill every British soldier they could find walking on the streets of Tel Aviv. Sloma was not only a soldier, but a soldier in a "military yeshiva" (seminary), a particularly disgusting unit, employed often to humiliate and maltreat Palestinians, and brainwashed into the most Nazi-like opinions.'

Nevertheless, as 'reprisal' for the killing of Sloma, the entire town of Hebron was 'collectively punished' by a curfew lasting for twenty-two and a half hours each day. Each day the curfew would be lifted at a different time without the population being notified in advance, in order to make it more difficult for them to do their shopping and attend to their affairs in the hour and a half allotted to them. Everyone would rush out of their houses and run to the shops to buy whatever food could be obtained in the time at their disposal before dashing home to be shut in till the next day.

Rabbi Moshe Levinger, the leader of the Kiryat Arba and Hebron settlers, announced that there should be 'a Zionist response' to the death of Sloma.

Danny Rubinstein wrote in *Davar* on 8 February,

1980 that this meant 'that the Israeli government should invest more of its efforts and resources in establishing a Jewish settlement of several hundreds of thousands inside the concentrations of Arab population in Hebron, Nablus and other places. Rabbi Levinger and his men did not come to Hebron in order to build a small, closed Jewish quarter in the suburbs of a large Arab town.' The article in *Davar* adds, however, that another extremist Jewish religious leader, Rabbi Meir Kahana (who was born in the United States), 'preaches to his followers that they should bring about the expulsion of all the Arabs from Hebron and the whole of Eretz Israel. In fact, most of the members of Gush Emunim and most of the inhabitants of Kiryat Arba think that in order to fulfil their requirements to make Hebron, Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] Jewish there is no other way but to adopt measures to remove the Arabs.'

When, in May, 1980, six settlers were murdered in Hebron, the world's press announced that they were 'unarmed worshippers returning from prayers' without giving any details about the kind of savagery meted out by these 'worshippers' (who, incidentally, always carried guns) on the Arab inhabitants of Hebron. Anyway, as Fahd Kawasme, the mayor of Hebron, remarked: 'Worshippers? Why did the international media fail to mention that there is no synagogue in Hebron?'

The Arabs of Hebron were 'punished' by a curfew which lasted for sixteen days. If a small child escaped the surveillance of his parents and ran out into the street, the parents would be arrested and the contents of the house smashed up. Farmers and smallholders who tried to sneak out at night to feed their animals and water their crops were arrested after being beaten up in front of their families.

The curfew lasted for twenty-three hours a day and, soon, Hebron was desperately short of food so neigh-

bouring Arab towns and villages sent in lorry-loads of food, but the Israeli troops would not allow the food to be delivered and the drivers were arrested. There was no milk for the children and so a lorry-load was sent in the belief that the Israelis would have sufficient compassion to allow it to be unloaded, but the Israelis refused to allow delivery and they arrested the driver. All night long, huge searchlights scanned the area to make sure no one was breaking the curfew and so animals died and crops withered. Palestinians from nearby towns and villages then arrived to tend the land, but they were arrested.

State funerals were held for the settlers who had been killed and eulogies were delivered at the graveside describing them as 'heroes' and 'martyrs'. The international media failed to mention, at this time, what kind of men they had been. Details began to emerge later, however, that one of the 'Jewish worshippers', for example, was an American with a long record of criminal violence. He held extreme right-wing views and had fought in Vietnam because he enjoyed 'killing gooks'. Wanting to go somewhere where he could continue his life of violence, he decided to settle in the occupied territories in order that he could kill Arabs but, first, he had to convert to Judaism. He adopted the name 'Eli Hazeev' because 'Hazeev' means 'wolf' and he had been known as 'wolf' in Vietnam owing to his violent nature. According to reporters on the *Washington Post*, he was a member of a neo-Nazi gang which displayed photographs of Hitler. He always carried a gun and in spite of all the press stories about 'unarmed worshippers', he was carrying an M16 rifle when he was killed. His favourite saying was: 'The only good Arab is a dead Arab.'

In 1979, Hazeev was arrested and imprisoned for eight months for smashing up homes in the Hebron area. Later, he committed similar offences and was arrested but he was not even put on trial. It is extreme-

ly rare, in fact, for Jewish settlers to receive any punishment at all for their violent actions and such punishment as they receive is generally only imposed as a result of public pressure. Although thousands of Palestinians have been held under administrative detention, the first Jew to be held thus was Rabbi Kahana. It was reported that he was planning attacks on Arabs and Arab property, including Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem which he was planning to blow up. (Bassam Shak'a points out that the Israelis have been excavating underneath the mosque, looking for the remains of the Temple, and they have also published pictures of Jerusalem without the mosque and showing the Temple.)

Nevertheless, under the heading of 'Begin leniency to extremist rabbi,' *The Times* reported on 6 August, 1980 that Israel's Prime Minister had ordered the lifting of the six months' detention order imposed on Kahana.

As several thousand mourners marched through the streets of Hebron, on the way to Hazeev's funeral, Arab houses on the route were stoned. Troops lined the rooftops and soldiers fired a volley of shots over the grave. In addition to General Eitan, Israel's Ashkenazi (European) Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren and other State and religious dignitaries, the Israeli Government was represented by Yitzhak Shamir (a former Stern Gang Zionist terrorist leader), the extremely right-wing Foreign Minister.

Rabbi Goren told Hazeev's parents, Colonel and Mrs Mahon, that Hazeev would be remembered 'among the heroes of Israel'.

Colonel Mahon thanked Goren but explained that he and his wife regretted the activities with which their son had been associated in Israel. The Chief Rabbi was shocked, said Colonel Mahon, and he asked in angry tones: 'What do you expect?'

The *Sunday Times* magazine (5 October, 1980),

which revealed many of the unsavoury facts about Hazeev and other settlers, also cited Hazeev's mother who said, after the funeral: 'We keep honouring the dead, but they were dead wrong.'

The West Bank paid a bitter price for the deaths of Hazeev and his friends. All the shops in the vicinity of the attack were blown up although they were closed for the Muslim weekly holiday (Friday) and the shopkeepers were not even in the district at the time. Property which had been acquired after many years of hard work was demolished by the bulldozers. It seems ironical that the owner of most of the buildings which were destroyed is a member of the Hirbawi family, and the names of his father and grandfather appear at the top of a list of Arabs in Hebron who saved the lives of dozens of Jews in 1929.

In addition to the 'official punishments', huge gangs of rampaging settlers broke the windows of hundreds of Palestinian shops and cars without receiving any punishment. Besides the curfews, the arrests, the beatings, the smashing-up of furniture and household goods by troops, there were other 'punishments' for entire communities. Young men had their heads shaved and, when a child threw a stone at the car of the military governor of Tulkarm, Colonel Shalom Mutzafi, a curfew was imposed, a number of people were arrested, houses were searched and then all males over the age of fourteen were ordered to assemble in the centre of the Nur Shams refugee camp near where the incident had occurred. The camp notables were forced to get into a truck and taken to Tulkarm. It was four o'clock in the afternoon.

The soldiers escorting them forced them to buy I£50,000 worth of construction material at their own expense and to load it onto the truck. They arrived back at the camp at nightfall and, in the light of hurricane lamps provided by the troops, they were forced to build a wall between the camp and the road.

Haolam Hazeh reported, on 14 May, 1980, that 'the men worked with guns pointed at them. Anyone who refused or did not work well was beaten. They were repeatedly told that this was their punishment for the stone thrown at the military governor . . . The forced labour went on until four o'clock in the morning . . . Most of the inhabitants of Nur Shams are refugees from Haifa . . . They say that the army has enforced a rule of terror in the camp. Many young people walk around bandaged. They told us they had been beaten after the military governor was hit.'

It should be mentioned, at this point, that when a town or village is under curfew, it is impossible for the inhabitants to receive medical attention. Even people who were gravely ill when Hebron was under curfew were prohibited by the Israelis from seeking treatment and it was reckoned that a number of deaths which took place could have been prevented.

Colonel Mutzafi was in the news again when there was a peaceful demonstration in Anabta on 1 May, 1980. Palestinian flags were displayed and some youngsters threw stones at Israeli military vehicles. The military governor and his deputy chased three boys who were carrying flags. One of the boys jumped over a wall and the governor shot him in the leg: he also shot and wounded two other boys. As the first boy, seventeen-year-old Naji Ahmed Mahmoud Abu Alia, lay bleeding on the ground, Mutzafi's deputy shot him and killed him.

Although there were dozens of student eye-witnesses to the murder, all of whom were prepared to testify, Mutzafi concocted a story (which was swallowed at first by almost the entire press of Israel) that the youth had attacked his deputy with a stone 'while holding a Palestinian flag in one hand and a knife in the other'. It was only after it was pointed out that the boy did not have three hands that Mutzafi changed his version and said that he had been firing

'warning shots' but, if this had been the case, the three boys would not have been hit.

The mayor of Anabta, Wahid Hamdallah said: 'It is as if we killed someone and not the other way round. They imposed a curfew on us and would not allow us to honour the dead. They forced us to hold the funeral in the middle of the night with only three members of his family present.'

Bassam Shak'a reflects on the contrast between the funerals of Hazeev and of the unfortunate young Palestinian. When the mayor of Anabta protested about the unjust curfew and the clandestine funeral arrangements, 'the Israelis put him in a room,' Shak'a said, 'and they kept him there until two o'clock in the morning. There were two ferocious dogs in the room and if he moved, the dogs attacked him and tore his clothing. Can you imagine the mayor of any town anywhere in the world being treated like this?'

Previously, Mutzafi had served as deputy military governor of Nablus and he had a reputation for barbarity there too. In view of what was to happen shortly afterwards, it is interesting to recall that on 16 May, 1980, Danny Rubinstein wrote in *Davar*, in connection with the murders in Hebron: 'I heard a senior officer in the military authorities say: "If such a murder had to happen, then it is a shame that it did not happen in Nablus . . ."'

Expulsions

Bassam Shak'a believes that what happened to him was an inevitable result of an atmosphere arising out of events and attitudes, both past and present, which have been described in the preceding pages.

'The treatment of the mayor of Anabta,' he says, 'gives a very clear indication of how the Israeli authorities look upon Palestinian municipal leaders.'

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 'No one shall be subjected to . . . exile' and 'Everyone has the right to return to his country.' Abdel Jawad Salah, then the mayor of Al-Bireh (a town which was later to have savage 'punishments' inflicted on it, both by Israeli troops and rampaging settlers), said in 1977: 'Expulsion is practised by the State of Israel to remove leaders from their communities' because the aim is 'to create a leaderless minority of Arabs . . . as unskilled labour to serve their shortage of labour . . . The Israelis have expelled 1,560 leaders of their communities . . . most of them have never been involved in politics . . . The expulsion of so large a percentage of Palestinian leaders appears to be a pre-determined policy of genocide against the Palestinian people.'

Without exception, the deportees received no warning beforehand. A typical case in point was that of Dr Hanna Nasir, principal of Bir Zeit University, who, at 11.30 on the night of 21 November, 1974, was arrested without charge, blindfolded, handcuffed and dumped, along with a group of other Palestinians, on Lebanese territory, never to see his homeland again. Often, the Palestinians are dumped in Maronite-held areas and are, therefore, in considerable danger.

What made the case of the mayor of Nablus unique, however, was that the Israelis made the mistake of announcing beforehand that they intended to deport him.

In November, 1979, it was very widely and

prominently reported in the Israeli and Western press that the Israelis planned to deport Bassam Shak'a because 'he had condoned terrorism' and had 'refused to condemn the attack on the Tel Aviv coast road in 1978'. No one took the trouble to ask Shak'a what had really happened and the entire press presented the official Israeli version of events.

Yossi Sarid, a Labour Party member of the Knesset, declared (without even finding out what had actually been said): 'The views of the mayor of Nablus are reprehensible and disgusting, but unfortunately they are shared by many of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. This proves that the idea of co-existence under conditions of occupation is a complete illusion.' The Central Committee of the Mapam Party (a component of the Labour alignment) said that the statements made by the mayor of Nablus should be condemned 'irrespective of whether they amounted to complete identification with the murders on the coastal road, or to partial support for them . . .'

What, in fact, happened, however, was that General Danny Matt, Israel's co-ordinator of the occupied territories, sent for Bassam Shak'a. He entered the room to find a number of high-ranking officers, as well as an interpreter present — there were about six or seven persons there. General Matt shook hands and asked the mayor what his view was of the problems.

Shak'a replied that he thought conditions were becoming progressively worse and he spoke about the difficulties endured by the municipalities (even when money was available from Arab sources, the Israelis would refuse to permit the building of schools, hospitals or reservoirs) and the terrible economic situation, with inflation at more than 130 per cent. He also described the problems caused by the fact that Arab towns and villages were deprived of finance while vast sums were poured into Jewish settlements.

He went on to complain about the appalling conditions under which Palestinian political prisoners were living and he referred to an incident at Tulkarm prison when on a Friday, during the weekly prayers and in the presence of the Imam, soldiers shot at prisoners actually inside the prison. Matt said he did not know about this and promised to look into the matter. He also promised to look into the subject of the treatment of Nader al-Afuri when Shak'a brought this to his attention.

Matt then referred to two prisoners and said that one was a murderer who had killed his wife because she had been unfaithful and the other had been involved in the guerrilla attack on the bus and so he was a murderer too and would be treated in the same way as the other prisoner because there was no such thing as a political prisoner. He began to talk about the actions of the PLO and he asked if Shak'a had condoned the actions of the guerrillas on the coast road. Shak'a replied that what he did was to examine such actions and to try to understand why they took place without either condoning or condemning them. 'If I have a child,' he said to Matt, 'and if he does something wrong, I shall try to discover what made him do it. If I find there is a reason for his action, I shall attempt to deal with what has caused his wrongdoing, but if I find that there is no reason for his misbehaviour, then I shall take him to a doctor.'

Although, he said, the Palestinians had carried out an attack, the Israelis had committed many crimes in the south of Lebanon and in the prisons and against the people of the occupied territories and, he added, Israel did not respect the human rights of Palestinians.

Matt said: 'Did you condone the attack on the bus?' and Shak'a replied: 'Why do you ask that? I have already given you my opinion. You attack people and deprive them of their human rights and so they are bound to retaliate. I have received a letter from an

Israeli soldier who fought in south Lebanon and he was ashamed to be with the Israeli army there and to see what they did.' (An increasing number of young Israelis have been court-martialled and imprisoned for refusing to serve in the occupied territories.)

The mayor went on to say that as the Israelis considered their attacks on Lebanon to be in reaction to certain Palestinian acts, so Palestinian behaviour is in reaction to what the Israelis have done. The Israelis should realise, he said, that until they cease their unprovoked attacks on Palestinians and on south Lebanon, they must expect some kind of retaliation from the Palestinians because Israel does not have any kind of 'right' to conduct some sort of one-sided engagement.

Matt replied that he wondered what would have happened if Jordan had been in control of the West Bank. 'You would not be allowed to say the things you have just said,' he told Shak'a, 'but, of course, Israel is a democratic country.'

It was not, said Shak'a, a question of whether he could or could not speak. In Jordan, nobody had ever told him the land on which he was living was not his land and that his house was not his house, and he added that inter-Arab struggles were purely internal ones in respect of certain democratic values, but he stressed that: 'Nobody ever told me that I was a foreigner in my own country and my own town. What kind of democracy is this?'

Matt then indicated that the conversation had come to an end, and he said he had been happy to meet the mayor and he hoped to see him again.

Shortly after Shak'a returned to his office, Nader al-Afuri's sister called, and Shak'a told her that she had come at a most opportune moment because he had just been discussing her brother's case with General Matt who had promised to look into the matter. Then, half an hour later, the telephone rang and it was a call

from Israel radio saying that Matt had claimed that the mayor had 'condoned the attack on the bus'. The following day, there was a headline blazoned across the front page of *Ha'aretz* which declared: 'I identify fully with the coast road murders — Mayor Shak'a.'

Following this inflammatory report, there was a storm in the Knesset and the Defence Minister promised angry members of the Knesset that he would investigate the matter. Although Shak'a was not told anything officially, he heard that the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister, Ezer Weitzman, had announced that they had decided to expel the mayor. By that time, however, Shak'a's wife and lawyer had appealed to the High Court to overturn the decision. The military co-ordinator sent for him again and said he was being deported because he was 'inciting the people to act against the best interests of the State of Israel.'

Shak'a replied that the people had taken their decisions themselves and had not acted at his instigation. He realised by then that the conversation with Matt had been planned in order to trap him.

He returned to Nablus and told the people that he was going to resist deportation. He said: 'This is my country and I shall live here and die here and I will also struggle for my freedom.' The people of Nablus said that they would join him in the struggle against the occupation because the land belonged to them too. The mayors of the West Bank towns held meetings, and they announced that they would resign if any action was taken to deport the mayor of Nablus.

There were many demonstrations against the deportation order, and there was a strike throughout the West Bank. Then Shak'a was once more summoned to the office of the military co-ordinator where he found three men from the military government of the West Bank. They read the deportation order and said they were going to imprison him in Ramleh jail. He

asked if he could telephone his wife Anaya and he was allowed to make this call before being led away to jail.

While he was in prison, he had time to reflect on the events of the past. A few months previously, he recalled, he had been asked to go and see the Minister of Defence (it was then Ezer Weitzman) and when Shak'a entered the room, he saw many high-ranking officers there. Weitzman said that he hoped the mayor would pay careful attention to what he had to say because 'it affects your life and your future.' He added that Bassam Shak'a opposed Israel, and the authorities were not prepared to accept his attitude nor to allow him to continue with it.

'If you continue,' Weitzman added, 'you will be punished physically.' The mayor stressed that the Minister of Defence had, personally, uttered these words to him. Shortly afterwards, the military co-ordinator sent for him and made similar threats. He said: 'If you continue in this way, you will encounter the worst thing you have ever experienced in your life.' There was no doubt in Shak'a's mind, then, that the Israeli authorities hated him and all the other Palestinian mayors and also the Palestinian people.

In spite of the threats he had received, it did not occur to Bassam Shak'a at that stage what the Israelis might be planning if they failed to deport him. 'I thought that, if they considered me particularly troublesome,' he said, 'they would probably run me over and make it look like an accident. That kind of thing has happened many times.'

He was in prison for twenty-six days and was on hunger-strike for two weeks in protest against being imprisoned without cause and being served a deportation order without cause.

Pending Bassam Shak'a's appeal to the Israeli High Court, the mayors and councils of all twenty-four West Bank towns submitted their resignations.

As protest strikes continued throughout the West Bank, two of the mayors who had resigned, Kalam Khalaf of Ramallah and Ibrahim Tawil of Al-Bireh, accused the Israeli authorities of bringing fictitious charges against them in order to silence them. 'The attempt to exile Mr Bassam Shak'a, the mayor of Nablus, and the trumped-up proceedings against us are part of an Israeli drive to eliminate the West Bank leaders most opposed to the criminal concept of autonomy,' said Mr Khalaf.

He added that it was 'a blatant attempt to silence men elected to their posts by the Palestinian people.' The mayor of Beit Jala, another West Bank town, was dismissed from his post the previous year after being convicted on a similar charge. (In order to remove these mayors, the Israeli authorities made use of an obscure Jordanian law which decrees that a public servant found guilty of 'disgrace' — whatever that means — may be removed from public office and prevented from seeking re-election.)

Because it was impossible to quell the widespread unrest on the West Bank and because of the worldwide protests and the enormous amount of adverse publicity Israel had received, it was eventually decided to release Bassam Shak'a from prison and to re-instate him as mayor of Nablus. That, however, was unfortunately not the end of the story. In the months that followed, as Shak'a continued with his mayoral tasks, he felt bitter that no one had asked him what he had actually said to Matt and whether his detention and threatened deportation were in any way justified. Nevertheless, it did not occur to him, in spite of the threats he had received, that there was more — and greater — trouble in store.

When Muhammad Milhelm, mayor of Halhul, Fahd Kawasme, mayor of Hebron, and Shaikh Rajab Tamimi, Qadi of Hebron, were summarily deported to Lebanon, it was obvious that the Israelis had learned

a lesson from the Shak'a case. 'The Israelis wanted to get rid of the mayors because we were blamed for "inciting" the people against the autonomy but, as I said before, the people of Palestine are capable of thinking for themselves,' said Shak'a. 'Since the occupation began, the Israelis have been trying to find municipal leaders who would collaborate with them, but they have been unsuccessful and so they have resorted to deportations, arrests, attacks.'

Assassination Attempts

On 2 June, 1980, the day the two expelled mayors and the Qadi were to address a large gathering in the House of Commons in London about their experiences, the appalling news was received that a bomb had exploded in the car of Karim Khalaf, mayor of Ramallah, and that his foot was being amputated and that another bomb had exploded when Bassam Shak'a had started his car and that he was in a serious condition after the amputation of both his legs.

The mayor of Halhul said that there was no doubt in his mind about who had been responsible for the bomb blasts. The mayor and Qadi of Hebron agreed with him that it had been the Israeli authorities 'and it was most probably planned in the Ministry of Defence.'

A third bomb had been planted in the garage of the mayor of Al-Bireh but, as he had heard of the earlier explosions, he was not injured.

A report in *The Times* of 6 June, 1980 stated that Bassam Shak'a had been taken to Jordan for emergency treatment to combat gangrene and that 'right-wing Jewish terrorists' were widely presumed to have carried out the attacks. The report added that the mayor's 'unexpected transfer from Nablus was organised by his family after doctors said they did not have the necessary equipment to save him after complications set in. The family rejected an Israeli offer of medical facilities, and instead secured permission to transfer him to Amman. The transfer took place soon after a doctor's report that his blood pressure had reached a "drastic level".'

As has become customary in the matter of Palestine, the Western press suppressed many of the most important facts about the bomb attacks, perhaps because the reality was so horrifying that it would have caused a storm.

The bomb, which weighed about one and a half kilos, shattered every window in the Shak'a house. Shak'a's brother, who was some distance away when it

exploded, heard it and thought it was a sonic boom. Bearing in mind the determination of the Israeli authorities to get rid of Bassam Shak'a, it seems significant that after the bomb explosion when the family was desperately trying to telephone for help, they found that their telephone had been cut off. When, eventually, they managed to contact the local hospital, the hospital tried to send out an urgent call to some of its doctors but the hospital's telephone line had been cut too.

Shak'a says he wants to stress that the reports which said he refused treatment from an Israeli hospital simply because it was Israeli are untrue. Apart from the fact that he was not prepared to allow the Israelis to cover up their crime in this way, he recalled what had happened to his lawyer: Mrs Langer, who had received many threats, was almost killed when an Israeli settler deliberately drove his car at her and, when she tried to run out of the way, he followed her. If a colleague who works in her office had not grabbed her and pushed her out of the way, she would have been run over. Nevertheless, she was injured and she went to an Israeli hospital for treatment. The doctor told her that he would be ashamed to tell his wife and children and friends that he had treated her because of the fact that she defends Palestinian political prisoners and is, therefore, a 'traitor'.

Another point to bear in mind is that when Shak'a was taken to Jordan, he was in a desperately ill condition — his blood pressure had gone down to zero and his heart had stopped twice. Yet, when he was taken to the Dania Bridge, the Israeli authorities refused to let him cross into Jordan from there and made the ambulance go to the Allenby Bridge which added forty-five minutes to the journey.

A further significant — and sinister — point is that absolutely no investigation took place after the bomb attack. In view of the massive and savage 'reprisals'

for attacks on Jewish settlers, the curfews, the arrests, the searches, the beatings, the humiliations, the fact that there was no attempt to find the perpetrators of the outrage shows, at the very least, the different outlook of the Israeli authorities towards Jews and Arabs. A more worrying aspect of the matter, however, is the thought that the reason why there was no investigation is because the culprits were known and they were being protected — indeed, there is much evidence to suggest that this is the case.

No one questioned Shak'a, his wife, his children or his neighbours and he knows his telephone line was cut because the telephones of the other mayors who were attacked were similarly cut. Besides, the telephone had been working before the explosion because Shak'a had telephoned a friend. It seems that one can come to no other conclusion than that the intention was to prevent the mayors' families from summoning help in the event of the bombs having failed to prove fatal.

There are other clues. For example, the military governor invited the mayor of Jenin for a talk and he said to him: 'If you continue to oppose the occupation as you are doing, you will be punished physically', and the military governor also told the mayor of Qabatieh, Shak'a says, the day after the attack on him: 'You had better bear in mind what happened yesterday.' All these factors point very clearly, he adds, to who was responsible for the attacks.

Then, after the attack, Shak'a's sons noticed footprints in the earth near where the bomb had exploded and they also saw that a wedge had been driven into the garden fence, obviously in order that someone could climb over. The family called the police who arrived and examined the footprints. Then, officers of the military authorities appeared, saw the traces and 'walked around the place, backwards and forwards in order to obliterate the footprints.' They also removed the wedge.

The Shak'a family say that Israeli security men were constantly snooping round their house, watching their every move and they find it impossible to believe that anyone could have planted bombs without their knowledge. Another point is that before the explosion, 'the cars of security forces drove near the house in a manner that drew especial attention.' Also, whenever there is a loud explosion anywhere on the West Bank (one must recall that Shak'a's brother heard the blast which injured the mayor from a considerable distance), the military authorities always immediately rush to the spot, but on this occasion they did not appear.

One of the worst features of the whole affair is that, on the eve of the attacks, rumours were spread in Nablus that something had happened to the mayor and friends enquired about him. A few hours after the attack, Israel radio declared that these calls might prove 'that Arabs are connected with the attack', a calumny which was repeated by many of the pro-Zionist correspondents of the Western press. Mrs Felicia Langer said that those who spread the rumours were planning the attacks and wanted to prepare an alibi and to divert attention from the true criminals.

Two weeks after the bomb attacks, Ahmed Sabah, chairman of the village council of Suref between Bethlehem and Hebron, was wakened at one o'clock in the morning by men in Israeli army uniform pounding on his door. When he refused to open it, they tried to break the door down. Their military vehicle was soon surrounded by some of the 4,500 Palestinian residents of the village who started throwing stones. The Israelis fired sub-machine gun bursts into the air and left after placing a bomb on Mr Sabah's doorstep. He telephoned the police who sent a sapper to dismantle the bomb, and he revealed that he had also been attacked on 1 June, the night before the two mayors were maimed. According to *Davar* on 28 June, 1980, he also revealed that he had spoken at a meeting of

West Bank mayors to protest at the expulsion order against Bassam Shak'a; and an Israeli officer called Baruch (who is well-known among Palestinians as a sadistic torturer) said he would see to it that Ahmed Sabah was 'taken care of'.

Such threats are usually taken seriously by the Palestinians. For example, on 17 April, 1980, the Arab students at Israeli universities held a meeting to protest against 'the bloody attack of the Israeli occupation forces on Palestinian students in the West Bank'. During the meeting at Haifa University, an Israeli officer threatened a member of the Arab Students' Committee, Rafiq Badarna, and said: 'We shall break up your committee'. Ten days later, Rafiq Badarna was arrested on the ridiculous charge of 'having written slogans on the wall of a private house six months previously', an incident of which Rafiq Badarna had no knowledge. He was interrogated for twenty-five hours non-stop and was so severely beaten that he lost three teeth. During the 'investigation', the interrogators repeatedly threatened to 'break up the Arab Students' Committee'.

According to a report from Paris in *The Times* of 11 September, 1980, evidence had been published that Abraham Achitov, chief of the Shin Beth, the Israeli secret service, had resigned after being forbidden to continue investigations into the attacks on the mayors. The information came from the magazine *Israel and Palestine* which is published in Paris by an Israeli, Maxim Ghilan. A former member of the Stern Gang, he left Israel in 1969 and is extremely knowledgeable and reliable in his information on the Israeli secret service.

The magazine's June issue was published in Paris on 2 June, the day that the mayors were maimed, and it gave details of a plot to assassinate the mayors and to blow up Al Aqsa mosque. The account stated that Mr Achitov's resignation was withdrawn only temporarily

after Menachem Begin asked him to remain at his post until the end of the year in order to discredit a report which had appeared in the *Washington Post*. This report had stated that Achitov had resigned because he had not been permitted to prosecute two suspects whom he believed were involved in the bombings.

It was claimed that Achitov believed the two suspects had each led groups of three men in 'a special commando unit' which had placed the bombs in the mayors' cars. The account added that the two suspects belonged to a group established by one of Begin's advisers who is 'an ultra right-wing extremist'. It was also claimed that, while Begin was in opposition, he had been persuaded that there was a need for 'a clandestine killer department'. This group has made use of 'committed fanatics' and 'religious extremists'.

The group's leader, says the report, a former English university student, has worked for Mossad (Israeli Intelligence which set up the 'Wrath of God' killer squads when Mrs Golda Meir was Prime Minister: these squads murdered many Palestinians throughout the world). He used the services of zealot groups in Israel, the West Bank, the United States, France, West Germany, the Netherlands and Italy. Committed fanatics were prepared to volunteer for 'special commando units, prepared to carry out such raids as those against the West Bank mayors'. It was claimed that these groups were responsible for the bombings and when he learned this fact, Mr Achitov was obliged to resign.

After the bomb attacks, Amnon Kapeliouk visited the two injured mayors in hospital. He learned that Karim Khalaf had lost three litres of blood and had been brought to hospital in a state of shock and that the operation to amputate his left foot had taken three hours. In a nearby room, two young students from Bir Zeit university were lying. Dr Kapeliouk asked them if they had been wounded the previous day during the

demonstration. 'What demonstration?' asked one of them, a geology student. 'We were walking along the main road to Latrun when a civilian car with a military number plate passed us. The occupants called to us to stop but we paid no attention and suddenly they fired at us. I was wounded in the back and my friend Riad Anaya here was hit in his back and leg.'

'Didn't you throw stones?' asked Dr Kapeliouk.

'No,' replied the student angrily. 'We neither threw stones nor pieces of paper. They shot at us for no reason...'

Dr Kapeliouk then went to see Bassam Shak'a, who was 'lying in the hospital in the beautiful Nablus suburb of Rafidiya.' His condition was still serious because, in addition to his blood pressure having been zero and his pulse having stopped, he had required many blood transfusions because he had lost seven litres of blood. Relatives and friends were waiting in the corridor and near the door in silence and, wrote Dr Kapeliouk, 'Shak'a's wife Anaya lies in the next room still in shock. No one is allowed to see her.'

The journalist approached the bed and he wrote: 'The sight is terrible. One can clearly see, in spite of the covering blanket, that the man has no legs. He welcomes us in a weak voice and says: "Thanks for coming. The Israelis should know. The criminals begin with us and will continue with Jews. It will not stop. The government of evil will not let us live in peace and it will not let Israeli Jews live in peace. The methods they are now using against us will be used against Jews. They have no respect for any human values concerning us and they will do the same thing to you. It is, therefore, the duty of the peace forces in Israel to fight more strongly in order to thwart the plans of the evil rulers to prevent a just peace".'

When asked how he felt, the mayor replied: 'My spirits are even better than they were before the cowardly attack', and he tried to smile. He continued:

'They thought they could beat us into submission, but we shall not stop fighting for our rights. They don't understand that you can't break the will of a whole people.'

Slogans prepared by the students were hanging over the bed. These said: 'Even if a patriot loses his legs, the feet of the people stand on the land of Palestine', and 'We can be tortured, deported and killed but we shall never surrender'.

The word 'Bassam' means 'smiling' and it is an appropriate name. Photographs were relayed around the world showing the mayor of Nablus on a stretcher being taken to hospital with a smile on his face. A Palestinian who lives in Canada visited Shak'a while he was in London. 'I got two shocks,' he said. 'The first one was when I heard the terrible news of his injuries and the second one was when I watched the news on television — and there he was smiling.'

Commenting on the attempt to kill him, Bassam Shak'a said: 'This is another link in the chain forged by the acts of the authorities which want to force us to accept the autonomy conspiracy and the Camp David agreements. It is natural that they won't listen to any call for peace and recognition of the Palestinian people and their national rights. Like any other aggressive state, they sink to oppression and terror. Don't forget that the bomb in my car was preceded by the shooting of a student in Anabta on 1 May by the military governor of Tulkarm. Later, he visited the father of the dead student and said to him: "I am sorry that it was your son that was killed. The one who should have been killed was the son of Bassam Shak'a, and the son of Khilmi Khamun (the mayor of Tulkarm) should also have been killed."

'It should be made clear that this is their policy, deporting the leaders, demolishing or bricking up the houses and throwing their inhabitants into the street, continuing the settlements and confiscating the land.

All this is directed against peace and against justice,' he added.

Many of Bassam Shak'a's Palestinian friends, including Elias Freij, the mayor of Bethlehem, were unable to visit him in hospital because they were under administrative detention in their own districts. Nevertheless, those who called on him and the other victim of the attack were confronted with some inescapable facts which made them ask searching questions. For example, Danny Rubinstein wrote in *Davar* on 27 June, 1980 that it is not easy to obtain information in the West Bank because of the bad telephone system. (In fact, hardly any new telephones have been allocated to Arabs in the West Bank, on the direct orders of the military governor, since 1967.) However, he learned that Karim Khalaf had told everyone in the hospital that three weeks had passed since the attempt on his life 'and not one Israeli investigator had come to question him. They didn't question his neighbours either. He says that he and Shak'a saw Israelis in and out of uniform near their houses on the night of the attempt on their lives. Official sources give no information about the investigation. When Begin visited Israeli police headquarters this week, the radio announced that the enquiry into the explosives that hit the mayors was finished.' He added that it was still not clear who had perpetrated the attack on Ahmed Sabah and concluded 'as many other events in the West Bank lately are not clear.'

Writing of the lack of investigation into the attempts on the lives of the mayors in contrast to what happens when there are attacks on Jews, Amnon Kapeliouk wrote, in an article entitled 'This is the way they investigate in the [occupied] territories' in *Al Hamishmar* on 27 June, 1980: 'Tigris al-Butma, a very talented, quiet young girl, descended from a bus which had taken her from her village of Batir to the university in Bethlehem and walked with her friends towards the

university and then bullets were fired in the direction of the girls and Tigrid fell down. Her shocked friends carried her to the local hospital and from there she was transferred to the Hadassah Hospital. After several days of terrible agony she died.'

Only a few people were allowed to attend the funeral of 20-year-old Tigrid and the army surrounded her village, blocked the roads and forbade anyone to enter the village. Dr Kapeliouk wrote that no investigation had taken place and no one had been brought to court although there were eye-witnesses to the crime and he added '... we begin to suspect that this case, as well as many others in the [occupied] territories, will be filed and numbered... and forgotten in Israel... but not for the Arabs... Not long ago, after a long and oppressive curfew in Hebron in May, we reported in this paper facts about soldiers who had "beaten for pleasure" workers in Hebron who were returning from their work. We reported the place, the hour and even the name of one of the workers. Less than a week later, the army spokesman announced, and made sure the announcement was broadcast on the radio, that one soldier was punished.' (After the announcement, says Professor Shahak, he was pardoned.)

Returning to the subject of the girl who was murdered, Dr Kapeliouk added: 'This time, there is no need for a journalist to intervene. The facts are clear and known. Why are they waiting? Not to punish the man who fired will be understood by the inhabitants of the [occupied] territories and many others in only one way — that Arab blood is cheap and free.'

He continued that another investigation, that concerning the criminal attempt on the lives of the mayors, was also beginning to raise suspicions. Almost a month had passed, he wrote, since the mayors of Nablus and Ramallah had been maimed, but the official spokesman had said there were still no clues concerning the identity of the criminals. 'Moreover,' Kapeliouk

said, 'someone is spreading evil rumours pretending that the crimes were committed by Arabs. *Ma'ariv* is the most active in this, probably under the impression that it is "patriotic".'

He went on to write that the impression being given was that there was not much desire to discover the criminals 'and no desire at all to bring them to court. The truth is that the philosophy of the assailants is not all that far from that of our Prime Minister. We have heard of no arrests and no searches. When an Arab boy throws a stone somewhere in the West Bank, the system of collective punishment is imposed at once and the whole village is under curfew and suffers harassments and humiliations.'

On the subject of stone-throwing, which, as has been described, has resulted in much vicious 'retaliation', Professor Shahak declares: 'Contrary to the prevalent opinion of the Hebrew, and even more, of the Western press, most of the "stone-throwing" is a courageous form of attack on military vehicles by small, unarmed children.'

In an article entitled 'Investigating, investigating', in *Davar* on 4 March, 1980, Shulamit Aloni, a member of the Knesset, wrote that the security forces, the police and the army in 'Judea and Samaria' caused Israeli citizens much embarrassment and many hard feelings. Events which took place reminded people of what had happened in Fascist Europe before and during the Second World War.

When a Jew is murdered in the West Bank, she wrote, a whole town is put under curfew which, however, does not apply to all citizens but only to Arabs, and investigations and enquiries are held. But when Jews attack Arab inhabitants of the West Bank, no enquiry file is opened and if there is any investigation at all, it is conducted in such a way and with such speed that the guilty person is never found. The murderers in Halhul would not be brought to justice,

she predicted (this later proved to be the case) and those who maltreated young people in Hebron two years previously, stripped them naked and let large dogs attack them so that one of the boys died as a result, were also never brought to court.

Jalal Jaabri, a man of seventy years of age, was beaten by three settlers from Kiryat Arba on 2 February, 1980 and, as a result, he was in hospital in Hebron, seriously ill and in danger of losing his eyesight. His house is near Kiryat Arba and he had suffered a number of physical attacks in the past carried out by settlers from Kiryat Arba who want him to leave his house so that they can take over the property.

On the same day as the attack on Jalal Jaabri, the settlers also attacked the Adrim family which lives nearby and broke the windows of their house.

The police took no particulars about either case, she wrote, and the authorities made no comment and they made absolutely no effort to find those who had committed the offences. The police said they had taken no particulars because the old man (who was, at the time, lying unconscious in hospital) 'had not put in a formal complaint'. (According to the law, however, it was their duty to investigate whether a formal complaint had been made or not.)

Mrs Aloni added that 'everyone knows that a criminal offence has been committed. Would the authorities act in this way if Jews had been attacked?'

She also wrote that on 22 December, 1979, the police had entered Bir Zeit University and maltreated the students who made a formal complaint about the fact that they were beaten, their watches were broken and they were humiliated. The president of the university also made a formal complaint that a policeman had hit him on the face and humiliated him in front of teachers and students. On 13 February, almost two months after the event, Mrs Aloni asked a question about it

in the Knesset, and the Deputy Defence Minister gave what she called 'an astonishing reply'. He said: 'The subject of the question is being investigated by the military police. Since the investigation is not finished, I can draw no conclusions about the circumstances of the event nor answer your question.' She added that she was quite sure that, as nothing had been done about the matter by then, nothing would be done in the future.

In her article, which was published three months before the attacks on the mayors, Mrs Aloni also wrote: 'A disturbing fact is that in those cases of brutal treatment which even the military authorities cannot disregard because of the many witnesses and mass of evidence, both the investigation and trial are conducted in secrecy and under military censorship.'

What is the purpose of trial and punishment, she asks, if they are not published? (In most cases, these are not published in order not to reveal to the world that crimes of violence by Jews against Arabs go unpunished.) She adds that there is no deterrent element in closed trials and censored sentences. If police and soldiers who are sent to the West Bank to maintain order have to impose curfews and guard members of Gush Emunim, 'how are they to know that it is an offence to maltreat Arabs, to beat them up, break their windows, steal their cattle and insult and humiliate them?'

The only case that was published, she said, was that of the military governor who allowed soldiers to throw tear gas grenades into a classroom but at the same time the statement of an important rabbi who was also a member of the Knesset, Rabbi Drukman, was published. He said that 'tear gas cannot harm Arab children.'

When the two mayors were maimed, Rabbi Drukman was reported to have said: 'So shall perish the enemies of the Lord.'

Danny Rubinstein wrote in *Davar* on 6 June, 1980: 'When Israeli terror attempts are discovered, there is an embarrassment and Israeli officials try to cover things up. About a month ago, four settlers from Beth El were caught damaging cars and property in Ramallah and Al-Bireh [the windows of scores of cars, houses and shops were broken in an orgy of destruction reminiscent of the Nazi *kristallnacht**]. I asked the police *this week* where the settlers were, whether they had been charged and how the investigation was progressing.' He added that the police spokesman said it was not their duty to supply information on the occupied territories. Danny Rubinstein then approached the military authorities and was sent from one spokesman to another but received no authoritative answer.

The same was true, he said, about the explosives which were discovered on the roof of the religious college in Jerusalem. 'Who was caught? Who is being interrogated? No clear answers are given. There exists a mysterious charge against Rabbi Kahana, against whom administrative arrest has been used . . . Officially, they declare that Rabbi Kahana is not connected with the explosives. With what is he connected?' He added that no one in Israel feels comfortable about charging Jews with crimes that many 'consider to be almost patriotic acts. Some think that discovering the Jews who had done these things will bring the state of Israel to the brink of a civil war.'

* As a 'reprisal' for the murder of a German diplomat in Paris by Herschel Grynszpan, a young Polish Jew, the Nazis launched a massive attack on the Jews in Germany on November 9, 1938. Synagogues were burned down and Jewish shops wrecked, and many Jews were beaten up while others were murdered. Because the streets of German cities were found to be strewn with shattered glass the following morning, the previous night became known as *kristallnacht* (Crystal Night).

In order to make it appear that Jews were not responsible for the maiming of the mayors, he went on, senior security force officials had claimed that the mayors parked their cars away from their homes because someone had warned them and, therefore, 'we are dealing with an internal fight within the PLO.'

Carrying out an evil and vicious crime is bad enough, protecting the criminals and refusing to bring them to justice is equally wicked but to attempt to accuse other Palestinians of the crime is, perhaps, an indication of the nature of Zionism. Anyway, Danny Rubinstein firmly refuted such a monstrous lie by stating that Bassam Shak'a's car was parked in the garden of his house, not far from his home. Rubinstein had asked the mayor of Al-Bireh why he had parked his car in a neighbour's garage and he had replied quite simply that after settlers from Beth El had smashed the windows of cars in the town, he had hidden his car at night. Danny Rubinstein continued: 'And so does anyone else who can manage it in Ramallah and Al-Bireh after that occasion when dozens of cars were damaged a month previously and, according to the mayor, that was not the only time such destruction had taken place because it had happened many other times as well.'

Unfortunately, the many 'Israeli correspondents' of Western newspapers published the lies and slanders of the Israeli authorities without taking the trouble to find out just why cars were being hidden from sight. Anyhow, if the mayors had been warned to expect car-bombs, they would surely not have stepped into their cars and switched on the ignition, as they did. Danny Rubinstein added: '. . . the next stage will be that of terror of Jews against Jews. The deliberate suppression of the facts about the beginnings of terror in the West Bank and the joyful declarations of Rabbi Drukman intensify the political gap inside Israel.

Perhaps we shall soon find out that the Jewish-Arab struggle is no longer important and that the approaching wars of the Jews are more important.'

Rabbi Drukman was not alone in his expressions of delight at the maiming of the mayors. Yossi Dayan, a leader of 'Kach', the extremist organisation of Meir Kahana, 'openly rejoiced' at the bombings, according to a report in the *Guardian* on 9 June, 1980. Dayan, who is the national organiser in Israel of Kahana's Jewish Defence League, a particularly unpleasant, violent, racist group, and who also runs an establishment called 'the Museum of the Potential Holocaust' declared: 'This is only the beginning.' When it was suggested that this was incitement (a crime with which so many Palestinians have been charged and for which they have been ferociously punished), he said that he was 'commanded by the Bible'. He added: 'As soon as the Arabs leave the country, they will have fewer troubles.'

The 'Yesh' (Our Israel) movement which describes itself as 'the proud Zionist core' in Israeli universities shares the view of Yossi Dayan. This extreme right-wing organisation demanded that all Jewish students should be allowed to carry weapons in Haifa University and that all supporters of the PLO should be expelled.

On 11 May, 1980, Yesh leaders distributed a leaflet signed by 'The Organisation to liberate Eretz Israel' which stated that Arabs could not live in a democratic society and that military law should be imposed on Arabs in Israel as well as in the occupied territories. The following day, the Yesh movement declared that if the university would not expel PLO supporters, they would do it themselves and they blocked the entrances of the main building of the university to prevent Arab students from entering. They chased Arab students inside the building and attempted to force them to leave. The security officer in the building then threat-

ened to arrest the Palestinian students who were being chased but not the Yesh members.

A delegation of about one hundred democratic Arab and Jewish students called on the Dean of Students and warned the authorities of the dangerous fascist developments which were, they said, encouraged by the president of the university. They then made specific complaints against some members of Yesh who had committed acts of violence, but the complaints were ignored and no action was taken against the Yesh members.

On 27 May, Yesh held a further demonstration (they have been holding regular demonstrations) calling on the university to expel Palestinian students. This time, they had reinforcements from other universities who were armed with clubs, chains and knives. Arab students were attacked with clubs, but the university authorities took no action. Two days later, the Arab Students' Committee held a sit-in to protest against the hooliganism of Yesh and against the fact that the university authorities had taken no action: they also protested at the expulsion of two members of the Arab Students' Committee from Beersheba University. During the sit-in, Yesh members behaved with hostility to the participants and shouted: 'Arabs go home.'

On 3 June, the Arab Students' Committee organised a meeting to protest against the attempts on the lives of the mayors of Hebron, Ramallah and al-Bireh. Yesh members arrived and began dancing the 'Hora' in front of the Palestinian students, shouting: 'You will end up the same way as the mayors.'

The Arab Students' Committee had planned to organise a meeting on 5 June, the anniversary of the beginning of the occupation, and the Dean of Students asked them to hold a symposium instead of a demonstration and suggested that this should take place under the auspices of the university. The following

day, the President of the University cancelled permission to use a hall for the symposium. The committee called a protest strike and the president revoked the decision.

On 5 June, Yesh brought in two hundred hooligans from outside the university who were armed with knives and chains. They entered the hall and, before the meeting began, they started shouting, 'Arabs go home.' They danced in the hall, waving Israeli flags and prevented the symposium from being held. When the participants in the symposium began to leave, they were chased by the Yesh hooligans. Then, the Yesh members gathered outside, lit a fire and shouted to the Arab students: 'Come and eat kebabs made from the legs of Shak'a.'

In Tel Aviv university, members of Kahana's organisation from the United States and the Soviet Union are active. They arrived with some dead cats, baked their flesh over a fire in the middle of the campus and called to passers-by: 'Come and have kebabs, made from the legs of Shak'a and Khalaf.' Complaints to the university authorities and the police received the reply that the students had a right 'to non-violent demonstration and free speech'.

Comment on such actions would be superfluous, but the fact that the perpetrators are not punished and are protected by the Israeli authorities demonstrates the way in which the Palestinians are now ruled over by a regime of evil and terror.

Bassam Shak'a is one of the latest in a long line of distinguished Palestinian martyrs who were considered too articulate, too heroic, too determined and too clearly living reminders of the rights of the people of Palestine to be allowed to live in peace and tranquillity. Mahmoud Hamchari, the PLO representative in Paris, was one of these martyrs who was killed by an Israeli bomb in 1973 as a result of which both his legs were amputated but, after a brave fight for life in spite of

agonising pain, he died a month later.

Bassam Shak'a was more fortunate. He says: 'I was given a chance to live, or perhaps I was not meant to die yet.' After his treatment in Amman, he went back to Nablus and continued with his work as mayor. A month later, he left for further medical treatment in Britain where the doctors pronounced themselves very pleased with his progress. The first time he was fitted with artificial limbs, he succeeded in walking unaided — something which is, apparently, extremely rare.

He has appeared on British television, given many press interviews, addressed crowded gatherings at the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Party conferences and in London's Commonwealth Institute. He talks of his country and its people, their hopes, aspirations and their terrible sufferings. Above all, he talks of love, of the brotherhood of man, of reconciliation and peace and, always, in spite of the pain, the sadness, the humiliation, the savagery, the injustice and the inhumanity, he looks forward to the day when sanity will prevail and the ordeal of the people of Palestine will be ended.

Bassam Shak'a says: 'I shall go back to Nablus, and I shall continue as mayor and as a citizen of my country. I am not afraid of what the future holds because I am in the right and the people who have done this thing to me and to my country are in the wrong. I am not afraid of the prisons or the bombs or the violations of human rights. My only fear is that I may somehow fail my people.'

Anyone who has been granted the privilege of knowing Bassam Shak'a will realise that such a fear is without foundation, but the mere fact that it has been expressed reinforces the knowledge that the mayor of Nablus is a man of principle, modesty and honour who may one day, insha'allah, be accorded his rightful place among the leaders of a truly free Palestine.

EPILOGUE

When this work went to press, Bassam Shak'a was about to return home; and he and his many friends throughout the world hoped that he would be left in peace to resume his duties as the elected municipal leader of the people of Nablus.

It is necessary to report with sadness, however, that he is not being allowed to fulfil this task. An article in the Israeli newspaper, *Ha'aretz* written by Yehuda Litani, on 23 March 1981, stated that: 'The military government of Nablus is harassing, interrogating and threatening anyone who gives a lift to Bassam Shak'a'. It also exerts a variety of pressures on anyone meeting the mayor. A Nablus councillor, Khaldoun Abd al-Haq, described how the mayor was driven to the home of a Knesset member who had died, in order to pay his respects, and after his return to Nablus, the driver of the car, Dr Tahsin Shakhshir was summoned to police headquarters and asked why he had driven Bassam Shak'a. He replied that the mayor's driver had been arrested the previous week.

Another councillor, Khalil al-Tyer who had been in the car too, was also questioned by the police. According to Councillor al-Haq, speaking at a press conference in Jerusalem, those who drive Mayor Shak'a are invariably interrogated and intimidated. Bassam Shak'a had been on his way to the press conference as well, but he had decided to turn back because two military vehicles had followed him from his home to the town hall.

The Shak'a family had heard someone digging up the ground beside the mayor's burned-out car at five o'clock in the morning of 22 March. Later, council workers dug up the soil and found bundles of wiring which appeared to be bugging devices. The previous day, a military vehicle was parked outside the Shak'a

family's home all night. The soldiers in it asked to see the identity papers of all those visiting the mayor, and they had taken particulars of these.

Shortly beforehand, Mayor Shak'a travelled to Anabta, along with several trade union leaders from Nablus, in order to express support for the villagers whose land had been seized for the Jewish settlement of Shavei Shomron B. On the way, they were stopped at a military road-block. One of the soldiers threatened to 'smash up the car' and a few hours later, Shak'a's driver was arrested. The other members of the group were summoned to the headquarters of the military government in Nablus, and the trade union leaders were beaten up while Councillor al-Haq was detained from the early hours of the morning until the following night. The Israeli officers said to him: 'We have ruled you for thirteen years and we will go on trampling on you. We will take your land and do whatever we want with all of you.'

At Passover, Mayor Shak'a made his way, by car, to visit the Samaritan sect on Jebel (Mount) Nablus in order to present his greetings for the festival. The Israelis set up a road-block and declared that the car could not proceed further, and if Bassam Shak'a wanted to climb Jebel Nablus, he would have to do so on foot.

This malicious and vindictive cruelty did not deter Bassam Shak'a although, as his legs were both severed above the knee, walking, let alone climbing, is a difficult and painful business for him. In spite of the fact that some of the Samaritans came to the road block to welcome him, he insisted on getting out of the car and continuing the journey on foot.

There seems to be no end to the Zionists' venom towards Bassam Shak'a. While the mayor was in Britain, he visited the Scottish city of Dundee and was entertained by the municipal authorities who decided to make Nablus Dundee's 'twin town'. Since then,

there have been a series of noisy Zionist protests. Although Dundee only contains 150 Jews, four hundred Zionists were drafted into the city in order to hold an emotional protest demonstration outside the city chambers. A leading Zionist Jewish member of parliament, Mr Greville Janner referred to the display, by Dundee, of the Palestinian flag as 'an anti-semitic outrage'.

According to a report in *The Times* of 4 June 1981, a petition was launched by a group of members of parliament, supported by the Board of Deputies of British Jews to protest against the 'twinning' and also against the decision to 'display the Palestine Liberation Organisation flag'. The Zionists repeatedly refer to the green, red and black flag in this way although they know very well that it is the flag of Palestine which has been in use since 1920. The twinning decision, said *The Times*, 'was followed by the first anti-semitic incidents in the city's history, including the desecration of the synagogue with swastikas and National Front symbols'.

What *The Times* did not report, however, was that in Dundee, as in other British cities with a high level of unemployment and deprivation, racist and fascist organisations like the National Front have gained a foothold among a small minority of unemployed, uneducated young people, and various buildings in Dundee had been daubed with swastikas long before the twinning was proposed. Dundee's Lord Provost (mayor) and its Labour member of parliament, Mr Ernie Ross, say that the swastikas were daubed by non-political teenage gangs who had also covered churches and other public buildings with such symbols.

Dundee's councillors say that they intend to stand firm in their support of Bassam Shak'a and the city of Nablus, but there have been many misinformed press reports resulting from Zionist fabrications and distortions. For example, a Conservative member of

parliament, Mr Michael Ancram of South Edinburgh, said that Dundee's councillors were 'shaming Scotland with their anti-semitic ravings'.

It is a very great pity that people in Britain who talk this way do not pause to ask themselves what is 'anti-semitic' about supporting the people and town of Nablus and their courageous mayor.

M.W.