

ISRAEL

Palestinians want peace with Israel but a separate state

By David Mandel

JERUSALEM

THE PALESTINIANS HAVE THE power to scotch any attempt at a Middle East settlement that does not take into account their national demands. Other popular national liberation movements, when in conflict with American designs, have forced concessions. But in the definition of "Palestinian rights" there is no strong unification and there are strong possibilities of cooptation along the way that may lead to further splits.

At first impression, Elias Freij and Karim Khalaf, mayors of the West Bank towns of Bethlehem and Ramallah, appear very similar. Both insist that their constituents' political representative is the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Both demand that the "autonomy" plan devised at Camp David be replaced by something that would lead to an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. Both believe that such a state could live in peace with Israel, even in confederation with it.

Freij was one of the few "pro-Jordanian" mayors re-elected when the Israeli occupation authorities permitted West Bank residents to choose municipal leaderships in April, 1976. "There can be no military solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict," he says.

"We Palestinians need peace more than anyone. It is Israel that has rejected any real autonomy, by grabbing more land, starting new settlements in the territories, expanding existing ones and making provocative statements about how it will continue to exercise real control."

Khalaf echoes Freij.

"I am against war," echoes Karim Khalaf, who, like most of the 1976 winners, campaigned against Hussein, in the name of the PLO. "I know that most Jews in Israel want peace, too. There must be Jewish-Palestinian cooperation in the struggle for peace."

But the mayors' unity is real only to a certain point. It reflects the position taken by the PLO and all Arab states except Egypt at the Baghdad summit conference last November (see *IT*, Nov. 22-28, 1978). Tactics and, ultimately, politics separate the two. However, Mayor Freij believes that the Carter administration is interested in restoring Palestinian rights, and that Israel's position can be changed through persuasion by American and other world leaders.

Thus, he willingly met with Sen. Harry Byrd in December, and other Palestinians who share Freij's opinion held similar meetings with Harold Saunders and Alfred Atherton in recent months.

In contrast, Karim Khalaf and many other West Bank figures refused to meet the Americans. "If they want to negotiate with the Palestinians," he said, "they know how to find our recognized leadership—the PLO—in Beirut, at the UN or in many other places."

Khalaf's basic distrust of American policy dominates the West Bank today. "Official" Israeli non-recognition of the occupation and verbal objection to establishment of Jewish settlements have had little deterrent effect on the repressive military regime and the development of colonial relations between Israeli and Palestinian workers, peasants and small bourgeoisie.

Khalaf stresses unity.

Khalaf speaks of "solidarity with democratic forces and the socialist world" in

Yassir Arafat's first deputy speaks of open frontiers between the two states, leading to dialogue, with peaceful reunification as the ultimate goal.

pressing Palestinian demands. But he insists that he has no basic difference with people like Freij, who clearly represents a conservative stream within West Bank society.

The mainstream of Palestinian political thought today, represented by Khalaf, is militant nationalist, not socialist—a reaction to national more than to class oppression.

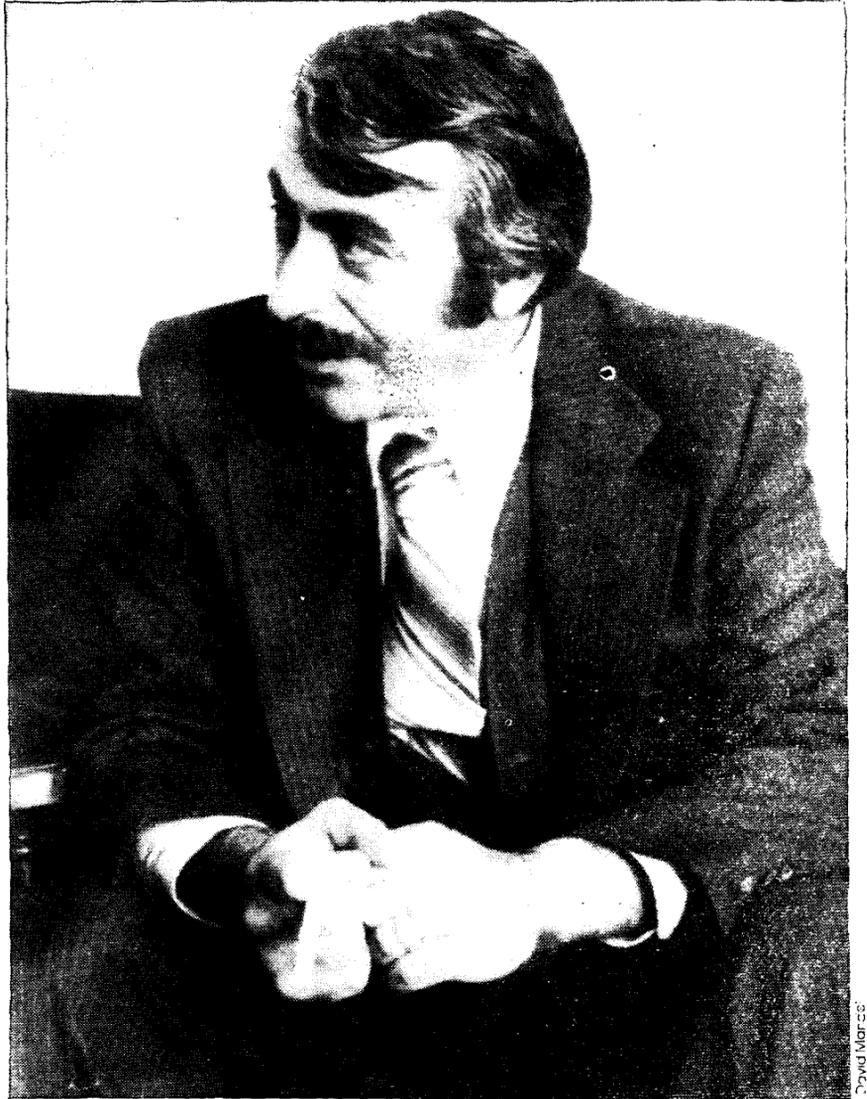
Nevertheless, the prevailing mistrust of American motives among West Bank residents—and the PLO—has opened many minds to more systematically radical ideas. Israeli occupation and the U.S. role in supporting it have spawned a stronger class consciousness among Palestinians than elsewhere in the Arab world.

Recent crackdowns by Israel have concentrated on leftist elements (see last week's *IT*), apparently in recognition of the fact that they pose the most dangerous threat to possible attempts at winning cooperation of the West Bank's traditional pro-Jordanian leadership.

Ibrahim Dakak is a Palestinian socialist living in Jerusalem, an architect by profession. He points to the various social upheavals taking place in the region—Iran, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Turkey, Afghanistan—as all having an effect on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Arab states polarized.

Sadat's initiative, Dakak says, is polarizing the Arab states into a reactionary bloc of regimes most concerned with the communist threat to their rule, and a progressive bloc favoring a more equitable distribution of oil revenues, faster technological development and a higher standard of living for its people. The Camp David accords are only one element of the struggle, he says. They would strength-



Karim Khalaf, mayor of Ramallah (above) and Elias Freij, mayor of Bethlehem (below).

en the U.S. and the reactionaries, if successful, but at the same time, sharpen the region's polarization.

The same left-right struggle exists within the Palestinian movement, according to Dakak, with a large center subject to both influences. "If the U.S. does push for Palestinian independence in the end, which is one possible result of continued struggle against the current proposal, we shall accept it, of course. In elections under such conditions, the present centrist PLO leadership would win, claiming 'revolutionary' victory. But the second election, after it becomes clear what kind of state they mean to create, will be much more interesting."

Communist editor of the persecuted East Jerusalem weekly *a-Talia*, Bashir Barghuty, describes the class basis of the potential political divisions within a Palestinian state: "The bourgeoisie would win a majority at first, based on its radical image today. Small landowners and shopkeepers have been radicalized by Israeli national oppression and by U.S. policy in support of it. But they still have no basic conflict with King Hussein, who has reconciled with the PLO."

"If a modified, more tempting version of Camp David were to be proposed," Barghuty predicts, "the pro-Jordanians could neutralize the peasants with promises that the Israeli threat to their land

would end. But there is a large reservoir of radicalism among Palestinian workers, not to mention many refugees who might return. The left would gain strength when the bourgeoisie fails to solve the new state's social and economic problems."

Palestinian state demanded.

Reports of the PNC discussions, that ended on Jan. 25, indicate that they centered on political-diplomatic strategy—for instance, whether or not to pursue PLO reconciliation with Jordan. The "rejectionist-moderate" debate was apparently unimportant, if it existed at all. But the strategic differences still prevented adoption of a clear peace program. A major escalation of violence during the meeting, including bombings in Israel, infiltration and shelling in both directions across the Lebanese-Israeli border, and assassination of a top aide to Arafat in Beirut, certainly contributed as well. Nevertheless, to the careful reader of recent PLO statements and the November Baghdad resolutions that the Palestinians endorsed, there is no doubt that they are united in their demand for a separate state.

In what may be interpreted as part of a debate leading up to the PNC meeting, several very dovish statements were made by Palestinian leaders recently. PLO Paris representative Ibrahim Souss said Dec. 19 that the organization "would stop violent attacks" and grant "de facto recognition" to Israel in return for creation of a state on the West Bank and Gaza.

Souss quoted Arafat as having told an American congressman the same thing, and Abu Iyad, Arafat's first deputy, spells it out in even more detail in a book of interviews published in early January in Paris. He speaks of open frontiers between the two states, leading to dialogue, and sees reunification as an ultimate goal, to be achieved peacefully.

"A class struggle will take over from the nationalist type of confrontation and set, face to face, on one side the Jewish and Arab masses and on the other their exploiters and the imperialists, those very ones who created hatred between our two peoples before leading them into war," Abu Iyad predicts.

Words like these are what now unite Begin, Dayan, Weizman and company with Sadat, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S. State Department, despite tactical differences all around. These forces all agree that a way must be found to defuse the radicalization among the Palestinian people which has been fed by their intense national oppression.



We are pleased to announce that Diana Johnstone, who has been a correspondent for IN THESE TIMES for two years, will be covering France, Italy, Germany, the formerly French-ruled parts of Africa and Indochina for us on a full-time basis starting with this issue. From now on, Johnstone will write weekly roundups of European events and regular on the spot, in-depth stories on current developments.

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

T IRED OF BEING TREATED LIKE the fifth wheel on the five-party parliamentary "majority of National Unity," propping up the one-party Christian Democratic (DC) government of Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, the Italian Communist party (PCI) finally withdrew its support on Jan. 26. Andreotti resigned and the search for a new governing *combinazione* was on.

Reviewing his party's many grievances, Enrico Berlinguer suggested ruefully that the PCI's "sense of responsibility" had been taken for a mere "readiness to give in," on the theory that the communists "had to belong to the majority to obtain some sort of democratic legitimacy." He denied this with restrained indignation.

By upholding the government's controversial austerity and anti-terrorist policies more consistently than the DC itself, the PCI has served as a lightning rod for hostile public opinion, while powerless to apply the policies it has defended.

It has grown increasingly divided over whether to go on trying to be a "governing party" or return to the opposition.

PCI wanted slowdown.

The PCI was virtually shoved out of the supporting majority last Dec. 14, when the Andreotti government decided to take Italy straight into the European monetary system despite objections from its Socialist and Communist partners. The PCI merely wanted to slow down and demand a *quid pro quo*, since keeping the lira tied to the mark will be very costly.

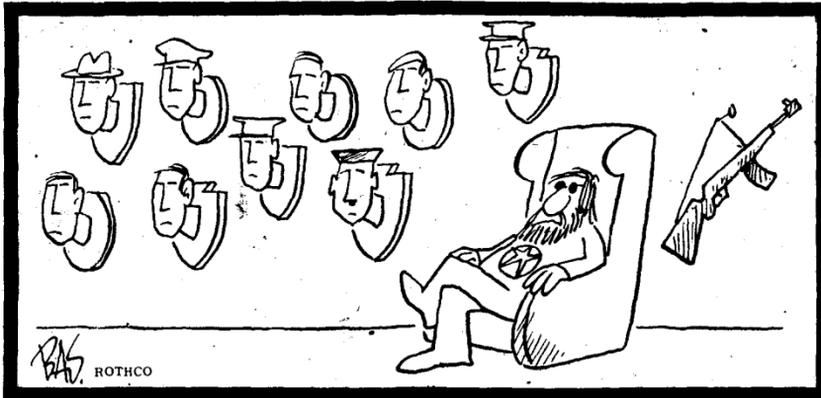
The PCI has long regarded the Common Market as potentially good for the Italian economy, if only Italy's representatives would be more alert, efficient and consistent in defending the people's real interest.

The Andreotti government's cave-in on the crucial monetary issue was just the sort of hasty retreat before German pressure that, on the contrary, can relegate Italy to semi-colonial status, with no shred of control over its economy. Post-war Italy's 38th cabinet crisis was thus its first "European" one.

Berlinguer also explained that his party was forced to leave the majority by "constant attacks" from partners who failed to treat the PCI with "mutual respect and honesty"—referring to the re-

ITALY

Communists quit, government falls



cent anti-Communist ideological campaign waged by Bettino Craxi's Socialist party (PSI) with an eye to the June 10 European Parliamentary elections. The campaign revived the notion that Communists are ideologically unfit to take part in democratic government.

If no new combination is worked out and early elections have to be held, all signs indicate the PCI would lose the big gains it made in June 1976, when it peaked to over 34 percent of the vote, and that the DC would recoup its losses.

But the PCI may count on its Socialist rival to avoid such an extremity, since early elections would upset Craxi's plans to build up the PSI by a strong showing in the Euro-parliamentary elections, before turning back to Italian voters as the "European" party.

PSI motives.

As usual, Berlinguer suggested solving the latest crisis by bringing Communists into the government. This never seemed less likely. DC chairman Benigno Zaccagnini, just back from Washington, soothingly denied any "discrimination" against the PCI, but said, "a realistic evaluation of the internal and international situation" ruled out its direct participation in government.

Since it officially left the opposition in August 1976 to join a "majority of non-confidence," the PCI has been illustrating the ancient Greek philosopher Zeno's paradoxes of the arrow which never reaches the target, or the runner who never overtakes the tortoise, thanks to a system of advancing always by only half the distance left to cover. By now, the party itself doesn't seem to know whether it is coming or going.

The likeliest solution now would be to

bring non-DC ministers into the next cabinet, probably from the small Republican and Socialist Democratic parties, but as "representatives of the coalition" rather than of their parties, so that the Socialists and Communists can be kept in the "supporting majority."

Such a combination would not need PCI votes for parliamentary approval, if the PSI went along with it. The PCI leadership would then have to choose: either support the government from the outside and try yet again to persuade the rank and file that "a step forward" had been taken, or else go into opposition.

Mystery in Milan

At 37, Emilio Alessandrini was one of Milan's leading state's attorneys, greatly admired on the left for his bold investigations of the 1969 Piazza Fontana Bank bombing that killed 16 people and was initially pinned on anarchist Pietro Valpreda. Alessandrini uncovered the so-called "Black Trail" leading to neo-fascists Franco Freda and Giovanni Ventura, who were finally brought to trial a few months ago in Catanzaro, Southern Italy. But last October, Franco Freda escaped from his guards, followed on Jan. 15 by Giovanni Ventura.

On Jan. 29, Emilio Alessandrini was gunned down in Milan as he stopped for a red light after driving his son to school. The killing was claimed by an ultra-left urban guerrilla group called Prima Linea (Front Line), which started recruiting youth from the anti-organized left "autonomy" movement a couple of years ago.

The murder by left-wing assassins of a left-wing magistrate came five days after the Red Brigades bagged their first labor union militant in Genoa, Communist party member Guido Rossa. Rossa, with the

backing of his factory council, had denounced a Red Brigades activist in the Italsider factory to the police.

Alessandrini had dealt with some minor cases of left-wing terrorism, but this was not considered his specialty. He had recently been concentrating on an investigation of the "ministers and generals who helped secret agents infiltrate neo-fascist dynamiters" and thus were probably in on the Piazza Fontana bombing, according to exonerated anarchist Pietro Valpreda's lawyer, Marco Ianni.

Ianni said he could not understand why Prima Linea would want to assassinate Alessandrini. "The last time I saw Alessandrini, he told me his investigation was moving ahead and that it would probably end up before Parliament, there was so much complicity in high places," the lawyer said.

"When the Red Brigades killed the Genoa Communist Union delegate," he added, "it was still possible to say it was because he was an informer, but this time..."

Chadli to succeed Boumediene

Col. Benjedid Chadli, picked this week to succeed the late President Houari Boumediene by Algeria's sole ruling party, that still calls itself the FLN (Front of National Liberation) after its heroic days, was previously known mainly for his presidential head of white hair. Rather than take over Boumediene's unlimited power, Chadli's appointed task will apparently be to mediate between the "liberals" around Foreign Minister Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the "progressives" around party leader Mohamed Salah Yahiaoui.

To cure the ills of Algerian society, Bouteflika would prescribe less "socialism" and Yahiaoui more. A moralist who finds approval among partisans of a return to Moslem orthodoxy, Yahiaoui gave the most rousing speech of the FLN congress, stressing that "it takes real socialists to build socialism."

But who are they? Of the 3,000 delegates at the congress, one-fifth were directly elected, one-fifth were sent by mass organizations (workers, youth, women) and one-fifth were army officers. The rest came from various branches of the administration, where Bouteflika finds most of his supporters among government officials and executives of nationalized firms.

Observers said the debate at the congress was the liveliest the FLN had known in years. In particular, delegates of the "progressive" tendency argued for making the presidential term, now six years, and the economic plan, up to now four years long, both cover the same five-year period, so that the party congress could seriously debate and decide the country's main policy choices every five years.

Col. Chadli was to be elected in a special uncontested election on Feb. 7. ■

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