

By Lesley Cissell

AS HE SHAVES IN THE MORNING, SARINUSSEIBEH has an ongoing dialogue with himself, he says, on the topic all his friends are talking about: just where is the *intifada*—the Palestinian uprising—going?

Nusseibeh, a Palestinian philosophy professor at Bir Zeit University in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, is philosophical about the fact that he cannot definitively answer his own question. The best he can do is analyze and react to events in the 30-month-old struggle, predicting nuances or possible changes along the way.

Just as Robert Frost took the road "less traveled," Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip embarked on a journey two and a half years ago that only those who have lived through popular revolts like the downfall of Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu can fully understand.

The only predictable element in the struggle is ongoing self-sacrifice and suffering. The only definitive answer is that it will continue.

With the May 20 massacre of seven Palestinian workers by a "deranged" Israeli, the subsequent killing of a dozen more and the wounding of another 700 by the Israeli army, the Palestinians had yet another chance to analyze and react. The day of the massacre, Nusseibeh and several of his friends from all factions of the Palestinian movement launched a hunger strike at the Red Cross headquarters in East Jerusalem in an attempt to call attention to the need for international protection of the Palestinian population.

"The massacre was a turning point in the *intifada*, and it emphasized that there cannot possibly be a turning back, especially since changes within Israeli society and the expected Israeli government do not present any hope of a compromise regarding a solution to the situation," says Simone Kuttub, a striker and chemistry professor at Bir Zeit University. Kuttub sees the massacre at Rishon Le-Zion as pivotal because it represents an unmasking of the intent of the Israeli government and of growing Israeli extremism. "All statements which have been issued by local institutions, by national figures, by the Unified Leadership of the Uprising, comments by people in the streets, all say it is part of the racist policy," says Kuttub. "Israeli society is moving to the extreme. It is part of a larger behavior pattern which is part of occupation."

Navigating an uprising: In their charting of a course for the *intifada*, many Palestinian analysts see more of a focus on strategy than in the past. "They [Palestinians] may raise the level of violence and antagonize themselves rather than reacting to it," says political scientist Ziad Abu Amr, a Palestinian from the Gaza Strip. "The Palestinians, under certain circumstances, may escalate the level of violence without being directly provoked, but as an expression of their frustration. The question is whether this will become the *modus vivendi* or only one component of the total struggle."

Until now, the leadership of the *intifada* has chosen to wage the struggle in a primarily peaceful manner. The *intifada* has been characterized by non-violent strikes, civil disobedience and symbolic stone-throwing. But after 30 months, more than 800 deaths and tens of thousands of injuries, the frustration and restlessness are so palpable they could be cut with a knife.

"We've gone through two and a half years



Charting the *intifada*'s future course

of self-restraint," says Nusseibeh. "We have, through this hunger strike, crowned the process of self-restraint, this method of non-violence, to support our message of peace to both Israel and the international community—and if the international community slaps us in the face by not responding, then there will be no place for it among the Palestinians. The efforts of the Palestinians or the anger that will be created will simply be directed toward struggle and sacrifice."

At the moment, Palestinians are in a wait-and-see mode, says Maher Abukhater, managing editor of East Jerusalem's *Al-Fajr*, the only English weekly in the Palestinian community. "The PLO and the *intifada* leadership are obviously expecting something to come out on the international level," says Abukhater, like pressure on Israel and the U.S. from other countries such as the Soviet Union. "They [*intifada* leadership] think Israel cannot go on forever rejecting any kind of peace settlement. As long as the PLO still believes there is some international initiative, there is no need to change the current course or escalate the *intifada*," adds Abukhater.

Key in the struggle is the perception of a continuing political process. As long as there is a belief that the international community—particularly the U.S.—is going to move on the Palestinians' behalf and push forward a political process aimed at achieving peace, the Palestinian leadership is keen to maintain its current non-violent course. But with that comes the implicit warning that if the U.S. and the rest of the world do not move quickly enough, the leadership will have to respond to its constituency in the streets and face the fact that there is little hope left in the peace process. No one doubts this would mean a return to the use of arms, both defensively and offensively.

"The street [as the actual *intifada* movement is called] will do whatever the leadership tells them," says Abukhater. "If it were up to the street, they would have carried arms a long time ago, because they are bearing most of the burden."

Palestinians are waiting, as is the U.S. gov-

ernment, to see what kind of Israeli government—Labor or Likud—comes to power. They also are waiting for a definitive decision by the U.N. Security Council on whether or not to send international observers to the Occupied Territories to serve as a buffer between the local population and the Israeli army.

Both of these issues, says Abukhater, are crucial to predicting the future course of the

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intifada. "If we get a Likud government with Ariel Sharon as defense minister, then we will know it is a war Cabinet and non-violent moves won't make any difference."

Adds Nusseibeh, "If we have a negative response from the Security Council...this will constitute a breaking point in our relationship with the U.S."

Hungry for defense: Recent events at the hunger strikers' encampment indicate that significant numbers of the street have given up on U.N. resolutions and action within the international community. They simply want to defend themselves against a well-oiled Israeli military machine.

On several occasions, groups of Palestinian youth have visited the encampment and discussed with peace activist Faisal Hussein the necessity of renewing the armed struggle. One group of young men even presented him with a petition demanding that they be allowed to use arms. But Hussein promptly tore up the petition, condemning violence as a defense against the Israeli occupation.

What is clear from the daily confrontations at the encampment is the growing democratization of Palestinian society. The youth confront the hunger strikers—a great many of them university professors—with the knowledge that since the beginning of the *intifada* and since the Israeli closure of Palestinian universities, the street has been turned into a school, an open forum for debate and the exchange of ideas.

But while the street has thus far gone along with the Palestinian leadership, they are giv-

ing notice that the leaders will be held more accountable for making tactical decisions from now on.

Political hopscotch: The Palestinian leadership is now in a position of "trying to hold on to its politics," says Abukhater, but events like those of the past weeks cause the political process itself to lose more and more credibility. "There has been lots of backward movement and regression in the peace process rather than advancing," says Abukhater. "A lot of factors contribute to a sense of Palestinian frustration—the kind that existed before the *intifada*. The Security Council cannot take a firm decision on what to do about Israel. The U.S. is the same way. It says something and the next day it cools off and retreats from what it has said. It reflects a weakness on the U.S.' behalf.... So, it is a feeling that all the sacrifices of the last 30 months are not paying off the way we thought they would."

For now the youth are content to express their frustration to the striking leadership. But if the current course does not "pay off," the day when the street takes over may not be far away. Kuttub sees the development of the street as the *intifada*'s biggest achievement. It is "building a new generation, and it is going to lead," he says. "We can't stop its development. We are building academics from people in the street now."

PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat said in his May 23 speech to the United Nations General Assembly in Geneva that the region is in the last quarter of an hour awaiting peace. "If eight-year-olds are throwing stones," adds Kuttub, "what do you think they are going to be doing at 15?"

Whether or not the struggle is in its last quarter of an hour, the Palestinian leadership's strategy of political moves and non-violent protests may be. The street is quickly moving into an influential position, and soon the views of Israel and the rest of the world won't matter. □

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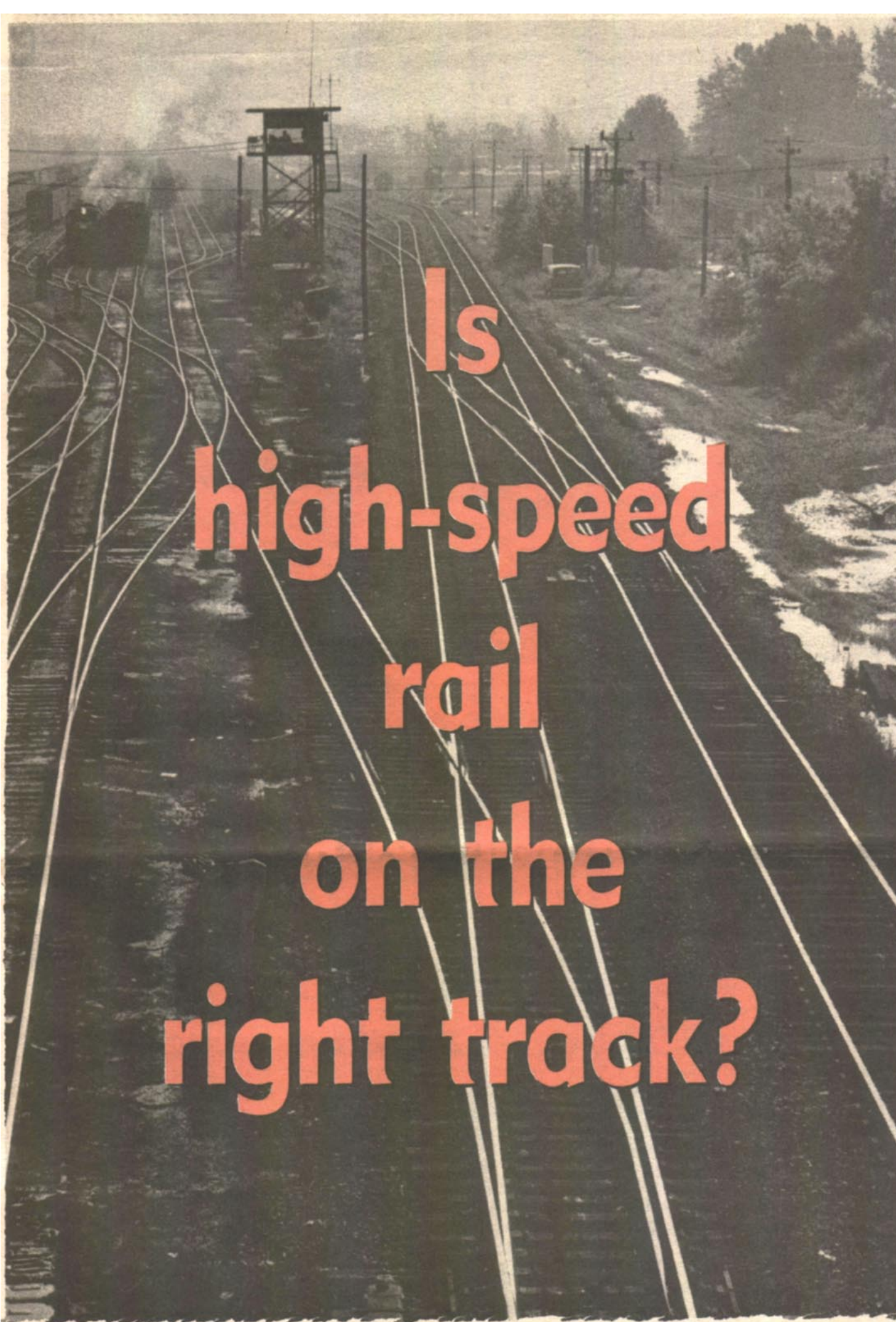
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American Policy should reflect America's Values



Is high-speed rail on the right track?

By F.K. Plous

WILL AMERICA EVER HAVE HIGH-SPEED trains? Will we ever travel from city to city at 186 miles per hour, as the French do on the latest version of their TGV (*train à très grande vitesse*), or at 205 miles per hour, as the Germans will begin doing next year on their ICE (InterCity Express)? Failing that, could we at least settle for trains that cruise at 125 miles per hour, as the Tokyo-Osaka Shin Kan Sen (New Trunk Line) "bullet trains" did when the Japanese inaugurated them in 1964?

As recently as two years ago, the answer

to all of those questions might have been no. According to popular wisdom, Americans won't ride trains and don't want government in the railroad passenger business. And the following developments during the '80s seemed to reinforce that assumption.

- In 1987 Pennsylvania Gov. Robert J. Casey shut down the state's High Speed Inter-City Passenger Commission just after it published a study showing that a Philadelphia-Pittsburgh high-speed line would be carrying 5.5 million to 8.8 million passengers annually by the year 2000 and covering the hilly 350-mile route in three hours.

- In 1984 a 123-mile Los Angeles-San Diego high-speed line proposed by private interests flopped when its banker, First Bos-

ton Corp., questioned ridership projections of 100,000 a day.

- In 1982 voters sweepingly rebuffed the Ohio Rail Transportation Authority (ORTA) when it proposed a high-speed rail bond issue. Budgeted at \$8 billion and marinated in politics, ORTA's spiderlike system would have reached into every corner of the state, including areas too sparsely populated to support a daily bus, much less hourly trains. Faced with a vicious recession and massive job losses in Ohio's manufacturing industries, cost-conscious Gov. Richard Celeste shut ORTA down.

That was then, this is now: But in the '90s the public and the politicians seem suddenly sobered by air-travel delays, highway

congestion, suburban sprawl, jet noise, vehicular pollution and a general logistical sclerosis that overwhelmed much of the nation during the last decade. Considering that new hub airports cost \$3 billion to \$5 billion apiece, new expressways cost up to \$60 million a mile and growing environmental objections can delay such controversial projects almost indefinitely, it's not surprising that the idea of an American high-speed rail alternative is regaining momentum toward respectability.

Frequent Flyer magazine, the bible of the affluent business traveler, ran a glowing review of the European high-speed train scene in last December's issue, then followed it up with a serious why-can't-we-have-it-here article in its February edition. Both stories fetched favorable mail from readers. When *Newsweek* did a gee-whiz story on Europe's high-speed trains last summer, including the Channel Tunnel route that will link London and Paris in three hours, enthusiastic responses in the magazine's letters column suggested that Americans may be a lot more pro-train—and more informed about the realities of high-speed train travel—than the "experts" here had long believed.

Today, almost all who have followed the creeping progress of the high-speed-rail movement in this country over the last decade agree that something is changing. Joseph Vranich, Washington representative for the High Speed Rail Association, a 600-member trade group, says there was palpable excitement at the association's 1990 convention in San Antonio, Texas, last month.

"What amazed me about this convention compared to earlier ones I've been to was how many of those who attended stayed right to the end and sat in on all the sessions," Vranich says. "I was so impressed with the growing number of companies exhibiting at the trade show."

The spectacle of nervous defense contractors sniffing around for a big-ticket passenger-train project was not lost on Vranich, who formerly worked in Washington for both Grumman and Boeing and considers the aerospace industry's appearance at a high-speed rail forum a healthy development. He also finds cause for congratulation in the spirited competition now breaking out among global consortia seeking contracts to build high-speed rail systems in the U.S. Texas, which hosted this year's convention to highlight its own plans for a high-speed rail system to run Dallas-Houston-San Antonio and back to Dallas (the "Texas Triangle"), is the current beneficiary of one such race.

"There is intense competition between TGV and ICE to build the Texas Triangle," Vranich says. "It's as intense as any aviation competition I've ever seen between Boeing and McDonnell Douglas or Grumman and Lockheed. I don't know who's going to win, but whoever does, the Texans are going to get the best system."

The trains that wouldn't die: But the convention's most bracing aspect, Vranich says, was not the growing number of would-be vendors. It was the vitality of the would-be buyers, the state and regional high-speed rail authorities that were supposed to be out of business but somehow stayed alive.

California, now linked with Nevada in a bi-state commission, is back with plans for a 230-mile magnetic-levitation system to connect the tourist centers of Las Vegas and Anaheim with trains that float above an electronic guideway at 300 miles per hour. In Ohio, ORTA's overambitious statewide network of 1982 has been scaled back to a more

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