

CONGRESS MONTHLY

May/June 1989 Vol. 56 No. 4

The West Bank and Gaza: Israel's Options for Peace

A Discussion on the Report of the
Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies

*Joseph Alpher
Leonard Fein
Daniel Pipes*

Soviet Jewry in the Age of Glasnost

Benjamin Fain & Jane Gerber

The Golem: From Magic to Metaphor

Jonathan Rosen

MARKED COPY
SEE PAGE 7

The West Bank and Gaza: Israel's Options for Peace

Joseph Alpher / Leonard Fein / Daniel Pipes

IN MAY 1988, the American Jewish Congress, in an effort co-sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, commissioned a study on Israeli options for dealing with the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank, to be conducted by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, Israel's leading national-security think tank. The resulting report, *The West Bank and Gaza: Israel's Options for Peace*, the first substantive investigation of its kind, was in due course published by the Jaffee Center, following a 10-month inquiry by a team of respected Israeli researchers, including two former chiefs of military intelligence, a former deputy minister from the National Religious Party, and a longtime advisor to two Likud prime ministers, Menachem Begin and Yitzchak Shamir. Two Boards of Advisors—American and Israeli—abetted the undertaking. The American board included: former Vice President Walter F. Mondale; former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance; former Defense Secretary Harold Brown; former United Nations Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick; and former Ambassadors Sol

Linowitz and Samuel Lewis. The Israeli board was made up of the presidents of five of Israel's seven universities—Haim Elata (Ben-Gurion University); Amos Eiran (University of Haifa); Moshe Many (Tel Aviv University); Amnon Pazi (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem); and Max W. Reis (Technion, Israel Institute of Technology). The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank linked to the American Jewish organizational community, also participated in the project. A subsequent publication, *The West Bank and Gaza: Toward a Solution*, a byproduct of the original study, was issued independently by the Jaffee Center without the sanction or endorsement of the sponsoring bodies. The discussion in these pages of the Jaffee Center findings is based on presentations given at a meeting of the American Jewish Congress Governing Council on March 19, 1989. The discussants were JOSEPH ALPHER, project coordinator, Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies; LEONARD FEIN, author and founder of *Moment* magazine; and DANIEL PIPES, director, Foreign Policy Research Institute.—ED.

SUMMARY: Joseph Alpher

THE *intifada*—the uprising waged by the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza since December 1987—and the diplomatic initiative launched by the PLO in late 1988, have added impetus to Israel's need to weigh its options with respect to the future of these territories. Indeed, any Israeli politician worth his salt has to propose his very own option—sometimes two—for a solution to the Palestinian issue. During the first week of March of this year, for example, Prime Minister Shamir suggested comprehensive autonomy one day, then promised annexation on the next (and then, a month later, unveiled his plan to hold Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza); Labor's Shimon Peres called for federation, and another prominent Labor minister suggested unilateral withdrawal from Gaza for a starter. Meanwhile, the new Administration in Washington was assuring Israel that it would not support a Palestinian state; President Bush is on record supporting a Jordanian-Palestinian federation. And Yasir Arafat was captivating many visitors in Tunis with detailed descriptions of Japanese-designed tunnels to link the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the two parts of the state he proposes.

These and many additional "options" have in common crucial drawbacks. Those who propose them appear to have made no serious effort to investigate their strategic ramifications for Israel. That was the purpose of a comprehensive study by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at

Tel Aviv University, undertaken at the initiative of the American Jewish Congress and joined in by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. From May 1988, a team of more than 20 Israeli generals, professors, researchers, and former government ministers—a membership whose diverse views represent around 75 percent of Israeli public opinion—labored for 10 months to produce detailed scenarios of the consequences for Israel of adopting any of the options that are currently on the Israeli public agenda. The result, published as a report of the Jaffee Center, was a study under the title *The West Bank and Gaza: Israel's Options for Peace*.

Six primary options comprised the core of our investigations. They are as follows:

1) *The status quo*. This, arguably, is not an option, since the status quo is already an existential fact of Israeli life; but there are segments of the Israeli public who would like to retain the status quo, at least as a temporary measure.

2) *Varieties of autonomy*. These run the gamut from the Camp David proposals through more comprehensive plans, as well as unilaterally imposed autonomy, that is, imposed by Israel upon the residents of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, or part of the territories.

3) *Annexation*. This option includes two additional variations: annexation with transfer, which is the euphemism for forceable expulsion of the Palestinian population; or, alternatively, annexation with the granting of citizenship rights to the Palestinians who are in the annexed territories.

4) *A Palestinian state*, to be negotiated with the PLO, in most of the territories of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

5) *Unilateral withdrawal*. Here we chose to focus on the option most frequently mentioned, namely, unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

6) *A Jordanian-Palestinian federation*, in which Jordan would be the dominant partner.

We asked ourselves what the ramifications for Israel would be if an Israeli government were to seek the implementation of any given option—what we might expect in terms of war risks; economic, demographic, and geographic effects; the American and Soviet reactions; the danger of internal conflict among Israeli rightists and leftists; the reaction of Israel's own Arab sector (18 percent of its population) and of the Arab world and the Palestinians. We pondered whether an attempt by a rightist government to deport hundreds of thousands of Palestinians might not generate a near-war between Israeli leftists and rightists. And we assessed the reaction of Israeli soldiers upon receiving orders to remove by force tens of thousands of Israeli settlers from territory destined for a Palestinian state.

In seeking to answer these questions, we projected a scenario of what might happen were Israel to decide to implement the particular option. Then we drew two conclusions: First, to what extent is the option in question feasible? Second, to what extent would it prove beneficial to Israel? We reviewed each of the six options in this fashion. The results, not surprisingly, were uniformly gloomy. All of Israel's current options regarding a solution to the crucial Palestinian issue—our study did not extend to a consideration of the Arab-Israel conflict as a whole—are, we concluded, either not feasible or not advisable.

LET US now consider each of the six options in turn, as they fell within the purview of the Jaffee Center scrutiny. I shall treat them in reverse order of the above presentation.

The Jordanian-Palestinian federation. This option, we determined, in all probability would be the most beneficial for Israel in terms of security. It would also be a boon for the Palestinian Arabs in terms of their economic integration into the Arab world. The United States would certainly back this arrangement, and most of the Arab community would tend to accept it. Nevertheless, for all its potential benefits, the idea of a Jordanian-Palestinian federation is not feasible because it is no longer on the Jordanian agenda, and it never was on the Palestinian agenda.

However, were circumstances to change, it was our opinion that the "Jordanian option," as the notion is popularly called, should be given careful assessment by Israel; although we also warned that any Jordanian solution—that is, a solution negotiated by King Hussein, whose rule encompasses a population that is 70-80 percent Palestinian—could in time turn into a Palestinian solution, in the sense that Palestinians would have the capacity eventually to take over the East Bank (what is today Jordan). Should that come to pass, Israel would then be confronted by a Palestinian state on both banks of the Jordan, moreover, a hostile state that is not likely to recognize the security arrangements Israel has

made with Hussein. Nevertheless, were the "Jordanian option" to come back on the agenda, it should be given serious consideration.

Unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. We found this to be an extremely dangerous and unpredictable option. In the best-case scenario, following withdrawal, the PLO would immediately set up a mini-state in the territory, but one that had not been negotiated with Israel, one in which the PLO owed Israel nothing in return. Israel would thus be perceived as having withdrawn out of weakness. Its military deterrence vis-à-vis Palestinian irredentism and incitement would have been undermined, and Israel would find itself faced with a state exporting continued Palestinian revolutionism. In the worst-case scenario, Gaza would become a mini-Lebanon, with the PFLN and the PLO Palestinians fighting Islamic fundamentalist Palestinians, with terrorism as the state's chief export. Israel would then have no choice but to close the border because it couldn't possibly control the movements of those 50,000 Gazans who today commute to Israel daily for work. In the aftermath, Gaza would be plunged into abject poverty, with an immediate 75-percent drop in its already low standard of living.

A Palestinian state. This is the only option on the Israeli agenda which is acceptable to a large number of Palestinians and which also approximates the decision of the Palestinian National Council of November 1988. However, were a Palestinian state to come into immediate existence, without extensive transition arrangements, it could prove extremely dangerous for Israel, as well as for the Middle East as a whole. It would be very difficult to assure that such a state would not constitute an irredentist entity seeking to implement the so-called "right of return" of the Arab refugees to the borders of pre-1967 Israel, the second stage in the long-range Palestinian strategy for the dismantling of the Jewish state. At first, there might be well-meaning Palestinian leaders willing to take the reins of government, but there would be no guarantee that they could control the more extremist elements, or prevent incitement by a country like Syria. In terms of sheer security, a Palestinian state would be a dangerous gamble for Israel. Moreover, no Israeli government that we foresee would be prepared to implement this option, nor would a majority of Israelis approve it.

Annexation. The exercise of this option would be an absolute disaster for Israel. It would lead to a serious weakening of Israel's ties with both the United States and the American Jewish community, with immediate negative economic ramifications. It would also raise the specter of a new Arab-Israeli war, for the Arab states would feel impelled to reconsider the military option which many of them have been moving away from in the past 10 years. Perhaps most dangerous of all, annexation would provoke increased strife among the Israeli population; and if transfer of population were to be added to annexation, all of these negative eventualities would multiply sevenfold.

Were Israel to annex the occupied territories and grant citizenship rights to the Palestinian inhabitants, then by the year 2000 the Greater Israel would find itself with an Arab majority. Already today, in Israel and the territories, there are more Arab children aged six and under than a compar-

able Jewish population. Should this Greater Israel seek to maintain an 80-percent balance of Jewish population, given the comparative birth rates of Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, it would require an *aliyah* of no less than eight million Jews by the year 2000, which means that almost the entire Diaspora would have to emigrate to Israel in order to right the disastrous demographic imbalance.

Autonomy. Our panel investigated a number of types of autonomy, including a recapitulation of what was agreed to and not agreed to at Camp David. We found that, in terms of security, autonomy would pose virtually no risks for Israel. However, the problem with this option is that there are no Palestinians who are prepared even to discuss the matter except as a transition stage to statehood. Therefore, autonomy, as Israel presents it, whether the narrow Camp David variety or a more comprehensive form, is a "non-starter" insofar as the Palestinians are concerned, unless it were to be specified what might be expected after the autonomy stage, most particularly, an offer of some sort of sovereignty somewhere down the line. But that type of autonomy is not on the Israeli agenda. Most autonomy proposals we found to be almost as uncertain in their consequences as the option of unilateral withdrawal, because in effect autonomy is unilateral withdrawal with the intent to leave some kind of self-governing structure in place. As we see it, under present circumstances autonomy is not a viable option.

There are no Palestinians in sight who would be willing to cooperate in such a venture in good faith, and those who did cooperate might be doing so with the aim of subverting the autonomy and looking to declare independence. On the other hand, it might be possible for Israel to impose some form of autonomy after the *intifada* were over, assuming that Israel succeeded in suppressing the uprising. However, it was our opinion that even if some degree of normalization were to be restored, it is most likely that either the *intifada* would flare up again, possibly in an even more virulent form, or, as I have already noted, the Palestinians would seek to escalate the autonomy into unilaterally declaring independence.

The status quo. As we see it, the status quo, under present circumstances, is bound to deteriorate in terms of Israel's relations with its two main allies, the United States and American Jewry. In terms of the Israeli internal situation, as the status quo persists, there is bound to be increasing strife, with proliferating fringe movements advocating refusal to do military service in the territories. The specter of war will loom larger, as the Arab states come to feel that there is no political way to solve the Palestinian problem. As the *intifada* continues and perhaps even grows in severity, it may ignite a spark which could set off a war between Israel and the Arab world.

In sum, the status quo is untenable. In immediate terms, it is therefore imperative that Israel do whatever possible, even unilaterally, to alleviate the worst aspects of the status quo. Looking beyond, Israel—and not only Israel but also the Palestinians, and perhaps the United States as well—must come up with more creative ideas for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

OUR STUDY of the options available to Israel for a settlement of the Palestinian problem thus ends on a rather disheartening note. Accordingly, we at the Jaffee Center perceived that the Israeli public, reading our findings, would experience a sense of disappointment and despair. We therefore felt duty bound, at this point in our proceedings, to go one step further in our responsibility, to indicate a direction that might lead to a possible settlement. Here we were encouraged by the fact that our heterogenous panel, comprised of people of different political persuasions and backgrounds, had succeeded in reaching an extraordinary degree of consensus. If this variegated group of Israelis could arrive at a consensus regarding the six options on the current Israeli agenda, perhaps, so we reasoned, we might come to a mutual agreement concerning some new ideas for a solution to the Palestinian problem. The result was an auxiliary publication, *Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza: Toward a Solution*, conceived and written on an entirely independent Israeli basis by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies.

I emphasize that what this latter publication sets forth are *ideas*, not a peace plan, not policy recommendations, but simply ideas as to the possible course of a peace process, which we were able to agree upon in applying what we learned from looking at the existing options.

The starting points for this set of ideas are as follows:

- 1) Israel, if it wants to reach a Palestinian settlement, is going to have to talk to Palestinians.
- 2) If Israel is going to talk to Palestinians, under existing

SUBSCRIBE TO

CONGRESS

MONTHLY

15 East 84th Street, New York, NY 10028

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

Gift Giver's Name _____

Send to _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

You may choose to enclose a personal note (which we will include with the first issue), or we will send a preprinted note with your name.

One Year \$ 9.00

Two years \$17.00

Three years \$24.00

(U.S. Currency Only; outside U.S.A., \$2.00 extra per year)

I enclose \$ _____

circumstances this means the PLO or Palestinians from the occupied territories who have a PLO mandate.

3) The gap between Israeli and Palestinian views is so wide that any peace process will performe be a long and gradual one, proceeding step by step. A genuine peace process, in our opinion, will have to take at least 10 years. However, while the process may be a protracted one, in order to build up confidence between the two sides, we recognize that the Palestinians will not enter the process unless they have some assurance that eventually—if the negotiations are conducted in good faith—they will achieve some form of sovereignty.

On that basis, we delineated a number of changes of concept, incumbent on both sides, which must take place for any process to begin. Israel, for its part, will have to realize that remaining in the territories is a strategic liability, not a strategic blessing. Further, Israel will have to recognize that ultimately the establishment of a Palestinian state in the territories—with provisions and safeguards, to be sure, for Israel's security—is a distinct possibility, and that it will have to enter into talks with Palestinians about such an eventuality.

The Palestinians, from their point of view, will have to recognize that the peace process will be a long one, that before they attain sovereignty they will have to reach new territorial compromises with Israel regarding the latter's security requirements, and that, from the Israeli standpoint, under present circumstances no Israeli government will enter into the process except on an open-ended basis. No Israeli government will commit itself in advance to a Palestinian state.

OBVIOUSLY, there is a contradiction here: the Palestinians will not enter the process unless they have assurances about ultimate sovereignty; Israel will not give these assurances. Here we pulled a controversial rabbit out of the hat and suggested that the United States—which is already deeply involved in the process, which is Israel's strategic ally, and which is recognized by the Palestinians as a key player whom they must persuade in order eventually to achieve what they want—the United States, possibly in concert with additional powers, the Soviet Union or the Security Council, offer assurances to the Palestinians that if they enter the process and continue in good faith, they will be supported in their ultimate quest for sovereignty. Similarly, we suggested that the United States offer parallel assurance to Israel that should the process falter, Israel will be supported in rolling back the process, either ending it or stopping at whatever stage it has reached until such time as it can be resumed.

The ultimate outcome of the envisioned process, as I noted, would be Palestinian sovereignty, but of a highly mitigated form necessitated by Israel's security requirements. We specified that Israel would require early-warning stations on the mountain ridges of the West Bank, as well as the maintenance of forces to absorb an enemy attack along the Jordan River. The Palestinian state would thus be essentially demilitarized, with the exception of a gendarmarie.

Moreover, because Israel would be withdrawing from the West Bank, a location affording a certain strategic advantage

in facing possible attack from the east, we specified that the process would have to be accompanied by a series of parallel peace agreements between Israel and additional Arab states, which would reinforce the Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Primarily, this would mean an agreement with Jordan, whereby the Hashemite Kingdom would demilitarize its own border with the contemplated Palestinian sovereign entity—that is, the east bank of the Jordan River—and not allow entrance to Arab expeditionary forces, Iraq for example, as happened in previous wars. In this way the strategic disadvantage of withdrawing the bulk of the Israel Defense Forces would be compensated by enhancing Israel's strategic depth, looking east toward a possible attack. We specified further that it would not be enough for the Palestinians merely to renounce the "right of return" of the Arab refugees to their former homes within the pre-1967 borders of Israel. In order to assuage legitimate Israeli fears of a second stage of Palestinian irredentism—that is, a Palestinian state as a precursor to further efforts aimed at the attrition of Israel's borders—the Palestinians, together with the Arab states, during the transition period would have to take steps to rehabilitate and resettle the refugees. Israel would thus have palpable proof of the Palestinian willingness to forsake the "right of return," backed up by a genuine humanitarian effort to alleviate the acuteness of the refugee problem. This, of course, will require the collaboration of the Arab states, as well as the economic assistance of other countries. In addition to refugee rehabilitation, the Palestinian state, again in the transition period, will have to create an infrastructure which will guarantee a minimal degree of social, economic, and, therefore, political stability.

A general provision of the peace process must take account of the Syrian factor, for it is not possible to implement a Palestinian solution without recognizing that Syria is the "spoiler" in the matter, with regard to any one of the options that we analyzed, whether it be the Jordanian option, or autonomy, or a Palestinian state. But in order to have a manageable project, one that might have some influence on the policy-making process that is now in progress in Israel and Washington, we at the Jaffee Center restricted ourselves, somewhat artificially, to an exclusive regard of the question of the West Bank and Gaza. We did not consider an Israeli-Syrian settlement, nor did we consider the case of Jerusalem in the event of a settlement. These problems clearly require serious study, but they fall beyond the bounds of our prescribed inquiry. However, we do specify that any Israeli-Palestinian settlement is contingent on Syrian involvement, either to deter Syria from continuing to play its "spoiler" role, or to integrate Syria into a separate Israeli-Syrian settlement.

WHAT have we accomplished in our present study? We have attempted to produce a comprehensive and objective assessment of the options available to Israeli policymakers that might bring about a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian problem. It is significant that in the course of the inquiry many of us changed our views regarding one option or another. When we started our deliberations, I frankly thought that the option of unilateral

withdrawal from Gaza was a benign and possibly beneficial option. I was astounded to discover some of its negative consequences. Others who supported the Jordanian option moved to the Palestinian option, and vice versa.

In general, we conducted our discussions in a flexible atmosphere and did our best to remain objective in order to insure a high academic standard. We submitted our findings to the distinguished Boards of Advisors, to the academic advisory board of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, as well as to a workshop to which we invited Israelis from across the political spectrum. It is our fervent hope that our labors will have provided the Israeli public, as well as all who are concerned with the matter under scrutiny, with a useful tool for assessing the realities of the Israeli-Palestinian problem and the possibilities for a peaceful settlement.

COMMENT

Daniel Pipes

I AM CRITICAL of the report produced by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies regarding Israel's options vis-à-vis the Palestinian problem, but first let me offer some praise for the effort. The report is intelligent in its formulations. It is thorough and, in many ways, convincing. It is particularly valuable for clarifying the options available to Israel on this crucial matter. It affords a more solid grounding for a discussion of Israel's future policies. I agree with much of its analysis, especially the point that the six options are all, in one way or another, unsatisfactory.

Where I disagree strongly with the report is with its basic orientation, that is, the underlying assumption that a Palestinian settlement is central to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israelis have forgotten a piece of essential wisdom they once knew and the amnesia has spread among Americans. It used to be that the debate between Israel and the Arabs would go as follows: Israelis would say, "This is a conflict between Israel and the Arabs." The Arabs would counter, "No, this is a conflict between Israelis and Palestinians." Then, somehow, in the course of the 1980s Israelis lost sight of what they once understood and they too, by and large, came to accept the notion that the conflict in question is one between Israelis and Palestinians, that is to say, a communal conflict between two small peoples on a small piece of territory.

That premise is untrue. The conflict remains one between states. Further, the Palestinians are who they are and enjoy the strength they do because they are backed by a vast hinterland, stretching from Iran to Morocco, but more especially from Lebanon to Egypt. Therefore, to isolate the Palestinians from this larger context is to miss a key point. To solve only the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to put out a fire in one house when the whole city is burning—all very constructive, but in the end futile.

To be sure, the Jaffee Center report, as Joseph Alpher has indicated, takes cognizance of the larger context of the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation, particularly the Syrian fac-

tor, but it does so only glancingly. So, to my mind, the Jaffee Center's exercise, however clever, is ultimately fruitless, and perhaps even counterproductive.

The heart of the confrontation remains the one between the Arab states and Israel. Of the Arab states, by far the most critical are those that actually touch upon Israel—Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Egypt has been *hors de combat*, so to speak, for 10 years. Today the Egyptians are interested in other matters, most especially, domestic affairs. The Jordanian government under King Hussein, for years has wished to come to an accommodation with Israel and has, in fact, attained one, albeit covertly. Were circumstances to change, the accommodation could become formal and more explicit. In Lebanon, of course, there is no government; some groups are friendly to Israel and others exceedingly hostile. There is nothing much the Israelis can do there, as they learned to their detriment in 1982-85.

Which leaves Syria. Syria is the one major Arab state bordering Israel that has a major military force, whose government is utterly unreconciled even to the existence of Israel, much less to living in peace with it. The Syrian challenge to Israel remains, and indeed has become even greater as one Arab state after another, particularly Egypt, has fallen away from the fray. The Syrian government has taken upon itself the burden of singlehandedly confronting Israel—which is what the Syrians mean by strategic parity. The area between Damascus and the Golan Heights is the most heavily fortified in the entire world. In the long term, Syrian missiles are far more dangerous to Israel's welfare than stones thrown by children in the West Bank.

NOW AVAILABLE

West Bank & Gaza: Israel's Options for Peace

***A Study from the Jaffee Center for
Strategic Studies of Tel Aviv University***

Conceived and sponsored by
The American Jewish Congress

\$10.00 plus postage and handling
\$2.50—First Class
\$1.50—Third Class

Please clip and return to: American Jewish Congress, 15 East
84th Street, New York, NY, 10028, Att: Eric Tirschwell

I enclose \$_____ for _____ copies of *West Bank & Gaza:
Israel's Options for Peace* (\$10.00 per copy)

Please send First Class (add \$2.50/copy) Third Class (add \$1.50/
copy)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Let me draw out this comparison by making an analogy. The United States, for years now, has been trying to reach arms-control agreements with Moscow. How much easier it would be to try to get such agreements with a smaller, more amenable Communist state, say, Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavs are small in number; they are rather friendly; they are amenable to pressure. The trouble is that they don't have the weapons, that they cannot make decisions of war and peace. Yasir Arafat is in a similar position. He cannot deliver on his promises, not even Palestinians, much less the Arab states whose creature he is (and not vice versa).

SO, if Israel were to reach an agreement with Arafat, and all the conditions on both sides were to be met, would the Arab-Israeli conflict be over? Not at all. The Syrian missiles would still be in place and, very quickly, the mini-state that Arafat and his followers had established would be under severe challenge from the Palestinians based in Damascus. For, indeed, there are two PLOs, as has been the case for most of the past decade: the Arafat PLO and the Assad PLO. The latter includes Habash and Jibril and Abu Musa and Abu Nidal and others of the same ilk. They tend to be dismissed, but they are senior figures in the Palestinian movement; they have thousands of followers; they have money and arms—and they are challenging Arafat. They will challenge him far more directly and decisively if he ever reaches a settlement with Israel.

Conversely, should the Israelis reach an agreement with Hafez Assad—this is not something in the cards, but let us assume if for the moment—would the conflict be over? I say yes. If the Syrians and the Israelis resolved their differences, then the Jordanians would quickly climb aboard and so too, willy-nilly, would the Palestinians, because they would have lost all significant Arab sponsorship. It would then no longer be in the Palestinians' interest to maintain the hard line they have been bruited all these years. Their leadership would cease to circumnavigate the globe as a kind of traveling royalty, and their followers would lose the benefits they now enjoy. The conflict would no longer be an international issue and it would therefore also be in the Palestinian interest to come to terms with Israel. Thus the conflict as it exists today is ultimately one of Syrian-Israeli confrontation, rather than a clash between Palestinians and Israelis.

I am not dismissing the significance of the Palestinians, but a report that looks only at the Palestinians, good and welcome as it is, is one that is fundamentally marked by its incompleteness.

A less fundamental criticism of the Jaffee Center report, though still a criticism, is its misunderstanding of Soviet goals. The report has a tendency to ascribe to the Soviet Union a positive and helpful role in the Middle East. In its words: "The USSR is not happy with the perpetuation of the status quo. It seeks to promote a negotiated settlement." But nothing in the record of Soviet diplomacy leads to this conclusion. I grant that in the era of Gorbachev things are changing. Certainly, in some cases the words have changed, but so far there is no change on the ground. To take the Syrian instance, while Mikhail Gorbachev has articulated a new position, very high-grade arms continue to flow into

Syria. What can one make of this? Perhaps there is a change in Soviet policy and attitudes, perhaps not; it is too early to say. I advise skepticism with regard to the Soviet Union.

A further criticism is the deficiency of the proposal—contained in the Jaffee Center's independent auxiliary booklet—that is premised on foreign aid for the region to buttress a Palestinian-Israeli accord, aid from the United States, Japan, West Germany, the Arab states. A realistic solution cannot depend on billions of dollars of somebody else's money. There has to be a more rigorous calculation as to how the parties directly involved can succeed on their own. Otherwise, the parties make themselves hostage to too many foreign players.

There is also a premise advanced in the auxiliary booklet that suggests that the two states—Israel and the Palestinian entity-to-be—"should undertake to honor their contractual agreements to one another, even in the event of regime or constitutional changes in one or both of them." This strikes me as preposterous. It is like asking Khomeini to maintain the contracts created by the Shah, or Lenin to keep czarist obligations. You can ask, but don't put too much credence in an agreement.

A final, but critical point: this concerns media simplification of the study under discussion. I call your attention to a cover story on the Jaffee Center study, including the auxiliary booklet, in the French newsweekly magazine *L'Express*. The headline trumpets: "At what price peace? The document that is dividing Israel." The very first line of the article—written, incidentally, by Shmuel Segev, an Israeli reporter of some reputation—quotes what seems to be the report as follows: "For Israel, a single option remains possible in a search for peace: negotiate with the PLO and acknowledge the eventual creation of a Palestinian state." Such an assertion is nowhere stated in the report. One can see, however, how the notion might have been deduced, for it is very easy to take the carefully modulated language of the Jaffee Center report and turn it into something different by simply removing all of the conditions and qualifications.

Joseph Alpher

LET ME RESPOND briefly to Daniel Pipes's critique.

In undertaking our analysis of the options available to Israel toward a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, we at the Jaffee Center did not try to tackle the overall context of the Arab-Israeli dispute. We recognize that what we have produced is seriously constrained by virtue of that fact. At the same time, I disagree with the tenor of at least one of the strands of Professor Pipes's criticisms.

As we see it, over the past 10 years or more, there has been a trend among the Arab states whereby an increasing number have come to terms with Israel as a political entity that has to be dealt with politically. This is one of the root factors of the *intifada*—the feeling of the Palestinians in the occupied territories that they will not find salvation in the Arab-Israel conflict, that most of the Arab world is no longer

prepared to wage war for their cause, and that they must do something on their own.

Of course, the peace with Egypt was the most striking event in this trend, but, as was noted, Israeli coexistence with Jordan has been fairly stable for an even longer period than the accord with Egypt. In effect, it is only Syria, among the countries surrounding Israel, that maintains a general war footing. I don't dispute the assessment that at present Syria has no desire to strike a peace agreement with Israel. The point is, though, that the *intifada* signifies, at least in part, the communalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is now less an interstate conflict, with the very important exception of Syria, and more a communal confrontation between Arabs and Jews in historic Palestine, *Eretz Yisrael*. In a sense, the *intifada* has returned us to pre-1948 Palestine.

Clearly, a settlement with the Palestinians does not end the conflict. However, a successful and stable settlement would serve further to isolate Syria. While we agree that we cannot today effect a peace agreement between Israel and Syria, we are certainly bidden to do our best to resolve this newly-raging intercommunal aspect of the quarrel, in order better to isolate the Israeli-Syrian conflict and thus be in a more advantageous position to tackle it somewhere down the line.

Surely Professor Pipes would not dispute the contention that if we could attain a stable settlement with the Palestinians, it could only be for the good of the long-term Israeli-Arab peace process, particularly as it concerns Syria. This is at the heart of the matter: Given the fact that a settlement with Syria today seems a virtual impossibility, and given the present (necessary) preoccupation with the Jewish-Arab communal conflict in Palestine, what are we then to do? Nothing? Or should we not take steps to tackle that conflict which perhaps lends itself to some kind of solution now. It seems to me that a Palestinian settlement would provide a more congenial setting for an ultimate Israeli-Syrian resolution.

Leonard Fein

THE ISSUE of whether the Arab-Israeli conflict is an interstate or an intercommunal conflict is one that has been debated in Israel for over 20 years now. In the decade between 1967 and 1977, Israel largely insisted that the conflict was of an interstate nature. This led successive Israeli governments to avoid—indeed, to seek to prevent—the emergence of a Palestinian interlocutor with whom to begin conversations directed toward a resolution of the conflict. This insistence, in a sense, was a self-fulfilling prophecy. One way to regard the most recent events in Gaza and the West Bank is that the Palestinians themselves have chosen to intervene in the prophecy and to reassert the communal nature of the controversy.

As for the emphasis on the Syrian factor in the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, just imagine that Syria, for whatever reason, has decided to enter the peace process.

What then happens to the Palestinians? The problem, obviously, is dramatically moderated. Nevertheless, there would still be 1.7 million Palestinians inhabiting territory controlled by Israel. The Palestinians, in the eventuality of a Syrian rapprochement, would be less able to mount a sustained international offensive, less able to pose a military threat. But they would still not have gone away, and something would have to be done about their plight. We would still have to give consideration to the various options set forth in the report of the Jaffee Center.

My own view is that the Israeli-Arab conflict, even since before the *intifada*, principally has been one of an intercommunal nature. Israel's failure to recognize this dimension of the conflict, in the years following the victory of 1967, was a major strategic blunder. The Jaffee Center report, incomplete as of necessity it is, goes a long way toward rectifying that lapse. □

The Sayings of Chairman Arafat

The following comments were made by PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, in an Arabic interview with Radio Monte Carlo (May 3, 1989), elaborating on his well-publicized statement, made as he ended a recent two-day official visit to France, that the Palestine National Charter, challenging Israel's right to exist, is null and void (caduc). Once again, it would seem, the PLO has undermined and obfuscated what have been thought to be credible signs of moderation.

Q: You said in French that the Charter is *caduc*, that is to say, nullified—

ARAFAT: That is your translation. Would it make sense for me to teach you how to translate?

Q: Let's say that it has "expired" [Arabic: *faata 'alaiha il-zaman*]—

ARAFAT: It has aged [Arabic: *taqaadamat*].

Q: Fine, the translation is: "It has aged."

ARAFAT: The word *taqaadamat* appears in many verses in the Koran with regard to other [earlier] verses. Does this mean that these other verses were nullified? No.

Q: If the Charter can be amended only by the PNC [Palestine National Council], are you ready to convene a meeting on the issue? Is there a possibility—

ARAFAT: Can anyone claim that it is possible to change something adopted by the PNC not by means of the PNC members, whether it concerns political decisions, the Declaration of Independence, or the Charter?

* * *

Q: After your visit in Paris, will the *intifada* continue as before, or is there a possibility for a period of calm, in order to concentrate on diplomatic activity?

ARAFAT: We will continue the uprising with renewed determination. The uprising will continue wave after wave, until the Palestinian flag is hoisted over Jerusalem, the capital of the Palestinian state.