



NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Model of Hope

In the midst of political turmoil, violence and hatred that is the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, it is often difficult to find something positive about the relations between the Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel. ¹However, one village outside of Tel Aviv, called Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salem (Oasis of Peace), while certainly not a solution to the broader problem, offers a glimmer of hope in an otherwise gloomy state of affairs. In this village Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel live together in a unique cooperative community. This is a situation which most Palestinians and Israelis view to be impossible.

Despite the historic bitterness between Jews and Palestinians, the residents of NS/WAS have been committed to finding ways in which both nations can build a peaceful future together. They want to create a social, cultural and political framework of equality and mutual respect in which residents retain their own identity and heritage. However, it is important to note that while the residents of the village **do not see** their mixed village as a solution to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, they represent an example that the two people can live and work together. It will take much more than this to resolve the conflict.

¹ Please note that those Arabs who live within the Pre-1944 to 1967 borders are Israeli citizens and identify themselves as Palestinian-Israelis.

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While the residents confront various problems among each other on a daily basis, problems which many times they do not have the answers to, they work to make their situation easier and more productive. The Intifada, the media, mandatory Jewish army service, and the internal and external political situations all contribute to the problems and the never ending tensions that the residents face. However, the residents have managed to develop strong bonds based on mutual trust which help them to overcome these conflicts and appreciate the moral basis for each others judgements and beliefs.

One of the most significant contributions of NS/WAS is its School for Peace - the only one in the Middle East. It was developed five years ago as a means of building mutual trust between Palestinians and Jews throughout Israel, by educational methods. The school, which is a separate institution from the village, provides an atmosphere where dialogues and group encounters enable Palestinian and Jewish citizens to come together to listen learn, and communicate to dispel the prejudices and stereotypes each has of the other. No one can say for certain how influential a small group will be on the society after completing a seminar program from the School of Peace. However, this fact does not imply a failure or false hope on the part of the school's leaders or on their goals and achievements.

For me, Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salem is a living example, demonstrating that if bonds of mutual respect and understanding are established, the two peoples can thrive together, and simultaneously develop

a strength which can combat almost anything that comes their way. The residents have shown the rest of society that Muslims, Christians and Jews can learn together to construct a road towards trust, peace and co-existence. In the midst of political turmoil, violence, hatred, mistrust and pessimism, NS/WAS and the more than 100 other political, social and educational organizations that share its ideals are slowly building the bridges for Palestinians and Jews to cross to dispel their prejudices and foster bonds of trust and respect. As Najat Arafat Khelil, a Palestinian woman once remarked:

A dialogue is not an end in itself. It is a means. What is important is what follows. We must use the knowledge and experience we gain today to go out and talk to others, to try to eliminate that ignorance which is our first enemy.

--- Robyn Ribner

Editors' note: Robyn is a member of the Hampshire Jewish community and she is concerned with stimulating dialogue which would help to change perceptions of the Arab/Israeli conflict as portrayed by a largely pro-Israeli media.

The End of The Cold War: A Kindler Gentler World for Whom?

In light of the recent changes in Europe the Western media would have us believe that the world is now entering a "kindler," "gentler era." In fact the atomic scientists even set back their doomsday clock five minutes to signify that the possibility of world apocalypse has diminished. The East-West Cold War may be waning but the inhabitants of the Third World are still subject to the exploitative control of the Western capitalist countries, a situation which could very well lead to the next World War and the destruction of humanity. It is in this atmosphere that the re-orientation of the military policy of that ignoble giant, the U.S., has to be viewed.

At the same time as Rumanians were celebrating the downfall of their hated dictator Ceaucescu, Panamanians were recoiling from the onslaught of the US invasion of their land. If 1989 was indeed the year of peace and the signal of things to come in the 1990s, for the "Third World" the picture looks very dismal indeed. We must also remember that a month earlier the U.S. deployed troops in El Salvador to help bolster the unpopular and illegitimate Christiani regime. The defeat of the Sandinista Revolution and Violetta Chammaro's victory in Nicaragua sums up the levels to which the U.S. will go to halt progressive regimes in the region. We must also note too their renewed attempts to destabilize the Castro government in Cuba. Alas, Cuba as the last bastion of Communism in the "free West" does not fit with the ideals of democratic society and as such has to

go. But history might have the last laugh, as they say, as the US refuses to learn from its interventionist follies of the past.

Aside, but of growing importance, is the so-called war on drugs. Instead of focusing on the problems in this country that drive people to such abuse, the US government persists in blaming the problem on the Colombian drug cartels. Being such "successful capitalists" they should know that supply only answers to demand. To this end, AIRWACS planes, whose spying days in Europe are over, are being revamped to monitor drug flights in the Caribbean region. This is all part of the on-going militarization of the Caribbean to "secure and protect vital U.S. interests." This is also seen in efforts to deploy US warships off the coast of Colombia, which is in clear violation of international law. With regards to other "Third World" countries, the US has also renewed efforts to destabilize the Iraqi and Libyan governments. Therefore, as the need for US troops and military presence diminishes in Europe, the US has once again assumed the mantle "international policeman of democracy," with special regard to the "Third World." Indeed it seems that their arrogance knows no limits. One wonders though, if this is not just an attempt to retain an inflated defense budget rather than deal with the political fallout that would occur with any cuts in military expenditure.

If people are indeed serious about attaining a more stable international peace, these are issues which have to be addressed. Two-thirds of all humanity live in the so-called "Third World," and if the US and other chauvinistic powers continue to obstruct

movements to improve their lot it can only spell disaster for all of us. After all, it seems only a matter of time until these dispossessed people become fed up with their condition and take things into their own hand. So a word to the bearers of olive branches, there needs to be some serious "glasnost" in the area of US military and foreign policy. This country, and the world in general, would really benefit from this.

--- Aidan Harrigan

A Last Word on the Nicaraguan Elections

The results of last February elections in Nicaragua left most observers shocked. Not even the Bush Administration really expected Violetta Chamorro to win. Once she had won, however, interested observers on all sides scrambled to explain the event. To me the reason for Chamorro's victory seems obvious: the U.S. had won its war; it had forced Nicaraguans to "cry uncle," just as Reagan wanted them to. While the implications are numerous, I would like to address one overbearing ramification that recent events in Nicaragua have for those of us who live in the U.S., whether we feel ourselves to be (North) Americans or not. Violetta Chamorro's victory, and the (as of April 30) possibility of an escalation of the present war in Nicaragua, could be interpreted to mean that no Third World country within the U.S. sphere of influence will ever be able to accomplish far-reaching change of any type on its own volition unless we, as residents of the U.S., force a similar change on the U.S. government.

The Sandinista government was without a doubt the first government in Nicaragua's history to seriously attempt to address concerns of human welfare. To this end, it eradicated polio, provided affordable health care to nearly all of the population, decreased illiteracy from around 50% to near 15%, and even built over 100,000 outhouses. These gains, however, have been partially wiped out by the economy's downturn in the late 1980s. The causes for this extreme recession are many. In 1979, at the end of the revolution, the Sandinista government was left with a destroyed infrastructure, an empty treasury, and an already high foreign debt. Since then, the government has definitely been mismanaged, but in marked contrast to many other Latin American nations, this has manifested itself more in bad policy than in blatant corruption.

Unfortunately, the Sandinista government was never given a "level playing field" on which to engage the problems it inherited from Anastasio Somoza - the dictator until 1979 - or to forge its own program. Rather, before it had even consolidated its power, plans

were being laid for its overthrow. Within two years, the country was engaged in an escalating war with the U.S., trained and financed, Contras. Furthermore, in 1985 the U.S. imposed an economic embargo which proved even more devastating to the economy than the war. These actions were designed with the express purpose of overthrowing the Sandinista government through destroying the social gains on which its popularity and thus its legitimacy rested.

In response to the Reagan administration's actions, hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens organized to force a change. People sent literally millions of letters and telegrams, set up professional alternative networks, marched in the streets, and even went to jail to stop the Contra war. While this grassroots action did definitely force a change in Reagan's policies - some even believe he would have invaded without the pressure - it never managed to affect U.S. foreign policy that would have been necessary for the Sandinista's to be able to succeed in creating the egalitarian democracy they claimed to be trying to create.

Whether or not the Sandinista government even could have succeeded had it not been obstructed by the U.S. is pure conjecture. Considering that a Latin American country with a healthy or even stable economy was, in the 1980s, an exception, I think a better question would be whether the Sandinista's could have avoided serious recession at all.

That the Sandinista government did not, was less a result of its skill, than of the fact that it never got a chance. The Contra war forced the Sandinista government to spend an average of 40% of its budget on defense since 1982. In addition, the U.S. economic embargo wreaked havoc on the country's economy. On the other hand, had the government had the tacit support (since active support is far too much to ask for) of the U.S.; we might now be able to see if the Sandinista's did actually offer a possible solution to the plight of the Nicaraguan people and, by extension, the people of much the Third World.

But, as I said before, Nicaragua was never given a chance. The story has been similar throughout Latin America and the rest of the Third World. It has been a rare case that a Third World government earnestly trying to better the lives of its people has been aided or even left alone by the Western capitalist powers. Unfortunately, this seems destined to be the case unless there is a corresponding change in the West. Since we cannot expect change from politicians, we must take the initiative ourselves. This means more than just changing our eating and buying habits. If we ever want to see any change for the better in the Third World - as well as in the Western countries - we all have to be politically active as we can. We have to force the U.S. government to be the government it claims to be; a government of, by, and for the people.

--- Chad Swimmer

Editors' note: Chad is a member of the Central American Solidarity Association (CASA).

THIRD WORLD ARTS WORLD

Goats, They Too Shed Tears of Blood

*In the eyes of the gloomy night,
He lay,
A corpse of wheat, waiting to turn into red dust,
His eyes hollow,
No reflections, only a mere still blackness,
Gazing, they peered at a world of anonymous,
Like an aardvark,
He came and went unknown,
Yet the machete tore scars so vile... hatred?*

*The wailing begins,
A member once concealed is now the opposite,
Actors amongst the crowd,
Perpetrators who must be visible to the community,
Finally all retreat to their shaded huts,
Some scream, others are tired,
Crows crack every moment of tranquility,
Their calls staining the village.*

*Police begin their interrogations,
Villagers yell painfully,
Their hips and backs like rotting tomatoes,
His face raised high,
The sergeant struts around proclaiming His capture of the
murderer,
Yes, the young man is found,
A shrivelled and scared body of meat,
His hands tied to his back with ragged cloth,
A face full of questions... of embarrassment,
His mama trembles in tears of anguish,
Her worn hands cover her eyes in disbelief,
He, the murderer, was with her that night,
But her words are only words,
The power of the mouth, it lies only in the authoritarian.*

Bats come back to roost in the mango trees after their nightly
foraging,
Soon, a small glimmer tries to pierce the dark cloud that overcasts
the village,
The mourning has somewhat ceased,
But smiles are still merely rare,
Puppets, they know they are,
A never ending story.
Some children frolic by the river,
One of them molds a policeman,
Another creates two bad people,
They play, the policeman captures one bad man,
One child erupts into floods of tears,
The bad man was a good man to her,
The children fraças,
Mud casts fall down into the open hands of the sand,
Gradually, the cloud leaves for a new location.

Mama, she grieves inside,
First for her innocent, then for the rest.
Stripes He has and uses them well,
The goat He just let loose to the gods,
It was reared, milked and slaughtered,
Puppets... they know who killed their member,
He, it was He who sits and orders,
It was He who was threatened by the political plight of one
man alone,
A lesson to the rest,
Yes, one goat whose blood stains the village is one goat from a herd
of many,
If one dies, the others bleat,
But the grass is green yet scattered, and the herd must move
on when pastures dry out,
The herdsman is to lead them, their bleats lost in the strong
and fearsome winds of his voice and actions.

--Norbert Cordeiro

You Are Involved

This I have learned:

today, a speck;

tomorrow, a hero;

hero or monster,

you are consumed!

Like a jig,

the loom shakes;

like a web,

the pattern spun;

all are involved,

and all are consumed!

--- Martin Carter

A Closer Look At Nelson Mandela's Release From Prison

The recent release of Nelson Mandela after more than 27 years of imprisonment has, not surprisingly, generated a great deal of excitement and comment around the world. Mandela was a living legend during the entire period of his imprisonment. To see legend becoming a reality is not an ordinary event. Now, the initial excitement over his release having abated, one is afforded the opportunity to assess the relative meaning of his release to the wider question of freedom for the oppressed black majority population in that unhappy country.

I for one will state quite emphatically that the release of Nelson Mandela is not an event for much rejoicing, as the white minority government in South Africa and its supporters around the world have tried to portray it. It is good to see that Mandela is now out of prison and united with his family, but his personal "freedom" is irrelevant, empty and meaningless as long as the 31 million blacks in South Africa have no freedom, as long as apartheid remains the policy of the South African government. Indeed, it is ironic to describe Mandela's release as freedom. **Mandela is not free.** He was simply transferred from a walled prison to the wider prison that is the Republic of South Africa. South Africa is literally a huge prison to the entire black population. Mandela's release should therefore not distract attention from the need to continue the struggle - including armed struggle - against the apartheid regime. Only the short-sighted and pro-apartheids, like Mrs Thatcher of Britain, and racists everywhere in the world, can conscientiously argue otherwise.

Look at the conditions in South Africa today and compare it with the conditions in 1962 when Mandela was imprisoned. Today, as then, the blacks cannot vote; they cannot live where they want to; they have no access to good and meaningful education or employment opportunities; are not citizens and therefore have no citizenship rights in their own country. It was in order to fight against these evils and injustices that Mandela went to prison in the first place. As long as the same forms of injustices continue unchecked, his release does not mean victory or freedom.

The only good thing about his release is that the African National Congress (ANC), now has a good and most experienced captain to lead the struggle for freedom. The ANC is the true and legitimate representative of the people, and only when it has replaced the white minority government would Mandela's release have any real meaning and value relative to the needs of his people. Unless and until that happens, we cannot speak of anyone in South Africa having any freedom, except the whites.

The only free blacks in South Africa today are those in the grave!

-- James Appe

If we must have justice, we must be strong. If we must be strong, we must come together; if we must come together, we can only do so through the system of organization. Let us not waste time in breathless appeals to the strong while we are weak, but lend our time, energy and effort to the accumulation of strength among ourselves by which we will voluntarily attract the attention of others.

--- Marcus Garvey