

said, «We don't see Arabs and don't have social contact with them.»

Although the uprising was from the start directed against the occupation army, the settlers obviously sensed it as a threat because it reasserted the Palestinian ownership of the land they had colonized. This was seen in a dual response: Settler attacks on Palestinians began four days after the uprising; meanwhile, there was a settler exodus from the Gaza Strip, where many of the settlements serve as weekend farms, and the residents have houses in Israel as well. The second phenomenon contrasts sharply with data from the height of the settlement drive when 90% of applications were for places in the Strip, it being considered relatively safe (*Al Fajr*, June 17, 1983).

In purely physical terms, the settlers have not been particularly threatened; in the first year of the uprising, they killed at least 16 Palestinians and wounded 107 more, whereas three settlers were killed, one of them shot by a fellow settler supposedly guarding her, in the march on Beita village in April 1988. Despite these objective realities, the impact was immediate: «Suddenly it is dangerous to drive on the roads and it is impossible to sell a flat. With more time passing, the situation becomes worse. The settlers suddenly found themselves on the margin of the Israeli society. They are aware that the society is no longer willing to pay for them,» wrote Dan Margalit in *Haaretz*, May 12, 1988.

The settlers' reaction has clearly shown that they perceive the army as their protection rather than that settlements as such are defense assets. In the wake of the army's failure to stop the uprising, i.e., to protect the settlers according to their expectations, there were unprecedented confrontations between political and military leaders on the one hand, and settlers on the other. Shamir was called a traitor when he went to the West Bank to eulogize a settler killed by a Palestinian with his own knife in June. In May, an Israeli settler had been banned from entering Palestinian population centers after he assaulted an Israeli soldier in Hebron- something that had never occurred before. West Bank Commander Mitzna told a Knesset committee that «Jewish settlers are the primary problem as far as IDF operations (in the territories) are concerned» (*Jerusalem Post*, May 29, 1989). Mitzna was not worried about the settlers' violence against Palestinians, but about their challenging the army's competence at a time when its stature was on the wane due to failure to halt the uprising.

The confrontations with the settlers raised a new danger: civil war. In late June, after a stormy Knesset debate concerning whether settler vigilantism could lead to civil war (among Jews), Shamir said on Israeli radio: «We must do everything to make sure such a war never happens. This is the most dangerous thing.» A poll published in *Yediot Achronot*, June 8th, showed that a three to two majority of Israelis expect such a civil war. In September, Israeli newspapers reported the arrest of some settlers suspected of having attacked other settlers' cars earlier in the year with stones and firebombs, to incite them to «retaliate» against Palestinians. That settlers' own actions pose the biggest threat to their security was dramatically highlighted by an incident in the West Bank in August. Driving to his settle-

ment with his children, a settler fired on Israeli soldiers on the roadside, whom he took to be Palestinians. His own baby son was killed when the soldiers returned the fire.

The specter of civil war was much discussed in the heyday of settler terror in the early eighties, due to the state's concern for maintaining its monopoly on power, and dovish Israelis' wishes not to have the Zionist colonial project appear so barbaric. Today, the discussion is much more serious because it is not only a question of long-standing tactical differences within Zionism being aggravated. Today internal Israeli contradictions are aggravated because the whole Zionist occupation is besieged. While Israelis may disagree on the means for resolving this dilemma, almost all have interests in an end to the intifada and restoration of the prestige of their most central institution, the military. Thus, how internal contradictions are resolved is a much more volatile issue in this round. That explains that even Shamir spoke out against civil war, whereas the extreme right tried to dampen talk of this danger in the early eighties. The question is raised: Can the Israeli system tolerate challenges when it is besieged by the masses of the intifada?

Security from abroad?

Comprehensive views of Israeli security place high priority on Israel's international allies, as we saw in the first section of this study. And never has Israel faced such international condemnation as during the uprising. The moral justification for support to the Zionist state dissolved as the world saw Israeli soldiers treating Palestinian children in ways associated with Nazi war crimes. At the very least, Israel's friends are being forced to view their support in more practical terms: Is the occupation viable? Can Israel survive if this situation continues?

Israeli leaders, for their part, have dealt with international criticism mainly in line with their own partisan interests and the views they hold on how to end the uprising, territorial compromise, etc. The only new common element in the Zionist leadership's reactions to international relations is that the «Soviet threat» is no longer mentioned, even by those who previously used this as justification for the dangers of a Palestinian state. Perhaps this argument became too ridiculous in a war being conducted, from the Palestinian side, by unarmed youngsters. Surely, in the light of their increasing international isolation, Israeli leaders want to try and take advantage of the new foreign policy thinking in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Most western European countries now appear convinced that Israel's interests lie in dealing directly with the Palestinians, including the PLO, and addressing at least their right to self-determination. The US is also aware that Israel may be forced to deal with these issues, even though its official position on the PLO and Palestinian rights is more circumspect. Secretary of State James Baker's May 1989 statement reinforced what his predecessor had discovered a year earlier, that the occupation is a deadend. Baker told the pro-Israel lobby, AIPAC, that :«For Israel, now is the time to lay aside, once and for all, the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel. Israeli interests in the West Bank and Gaza - security and otherwise - can be accommodated. ►