

## Sephardi Resistance And Solidarity With The Palestinians

### NOTES

- 1 Zu Haderekh, 13 September 1989.
- 2 Ha'aretz, 26 April 1949.
- 3 Ha'aretz, 9 May 1949.
- 4 Jewish Agency Minutes, 7 March 1949 and 29 April 1949.
- 5 Knesset Minutes, Volume 3, 618, 24 January 1950.
- 6 See The Educational and the Social Gap, Hedim, October 1978.
- 7 Bama'arakha, No. 25, July 1963.
- 8 Hodar, Israca, 1973, 18.
- 9 Woolfson, Prophets in Babylon, 267.
- 10 Hodar, Israca, 1973. Even now, in 1990, poor Sephardim and Palestinians are being forced to pay heavier taxation in order to finance the new influx of Soviet Jews!
- 11 Ha'aretz, 22 March 1971.
- 12 Hodar, Israca, 17 and 18, and Woolfson, Prophets in Babylon.
- 13 The Black Panthers, 9 November 1972.
- 14 Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, 169, and see Appendix V.
- 15 13 April 1971.
- 16 Ma'ariv, 8 June 1971.
- 17 Ha'aretz, June 1971 and Israca, January 1973.
- 18 Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, 188.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Mordekhai Soman, Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, 181.
- 21 See Israel and the Palestinians, Ithaca, 1975, and also Israca, January 1973.
- 22 Rafael Shpira, Khamsin, No. 5, 24.
- 23 Israleft, 20 November 1972.
- 24 Israleft, 20 November 1972.
- 25 Yedi'ot Aharonot, 28 May 1971.
- 26 'The Report and the Social Gap', Uzi Benziman, Ha'aretz, 18 May 1973.
- 27 Shevet va'am, 1978.
- 28 26 March 1986.
- 29 Koteret Rashit, 27 July 1988.
- 30 Number 41, 1971.
- 31 Israca, January 1973.
- 32 Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, 95.
- 33 Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, 33.
- 34 Ibid, 35.
- 35 Swirski, 1981.
- 36 Zu Haderekh, 3 February 1982.
- 37 Stars of the Arabic film and music industry in the fifties and sixties.
- 38 Originally published in Liqa', the magazine of the Jewish Arabic Institute of the Histadrut on 3 July 1987.
- 39 Swirski, 1981.
- 40 Al Hamishmar, (Hotam), 4 July 1986 and 11 July 1986, and Zu Haderekh, 30 July 1986.
- 41 Ha'aretz, 5 June 1987.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 The Times, 17 June 1980.
- 44 Ha'aretz, 27 June 1980.
- 45 Zu Haderekh, 16 July 1980.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Herald Tribune, 31 December 1982 and Zu Haderekh, 29 December 1982.
- 48 Ha'aretz 4 January 1984.
- 49 Ha'aretz, 5 December 1980.
- 50 Zu Haderekh, 10 December 1980.
- 51 Zu Haderekh, 17 December 1980.
- 52 Ha'aretz, 9 January 1981.
- 53 A derogatory term mocking the sound of Arabic.
- 54 28 September 1981.
- 55 Zu Haderekh, 24 February 1982.

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- 56 Ha'aretz Supplement, 26 February 1982.
- 57 Ha'aretz, 4 September 1981.
- 58 Zu Haderekh, 19 February 1986.
- 59 Zu Haderekh, 16 April 1986.
- 60 P. 26.
- 61 Ha'aretz, 9 January 1987.
- 62 P. 20.
- 63 P. 26.
- 64 Pp. 20, 21.
- 65 Pp. 227 and 228
- 66 P. 9.
- 67 P. 17.
- 68 P. 18.
- 69 P. 27.
- 70 P. 233.
- 71 P. 242.
- 72 P. 248.
- 73 P. 2%.
- 74 Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, 89.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Na'im Giladi-Khlaschi, The Black Panthers Bulletin.
- 77 The greatest territorial extent of the biblical kingdom of Israel.
- 78 Ha'aretz, 20 May 1986.
- 79 Les temps modernes, 88.
- 80 See also Charlie Biton's interview, Falestine al-Thawra, 17 January 1987.
- 81 30 November 1979.
- 82 Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, trans. Fu'ad Jadid.
- 83 Matzpen, January 1973.
- 84 Swirski, 1981, 296.
- 85 Ha'aretz, 6 February 1981.
- 86 The Israeli press, 22 September 1986.
- 87 Black Panther Bulletin, 9 November 1972.
- 88 Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, 96.
- 89 Zu Haderekh, 26 November 1980.
- 90 17 April 1981.
- 91 Les temps modernes, The Second Israel, 182.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid, 186.
- 94 Ha'aretz, 11 September 1981.
- 95 Ha'aretz, 18 September 1981.
- 96 Ha'aretz, 24 December 1982.
- 97 25 June 1982.
- 98 Zu Haderekh, 28 July 1982.
- 99 New Outlook, March 1983.
- 100 An acronym for 'For Improving the Life of the Community'.
- 101 Ha'aretz, 26 September 1982.
- 102 Ha'aretz, 23 September 1983.
- 103 Ha'aretz, 17 June 1983.
- 104 Zu Haderekh, 16 January 1985.
- 105 Ha'aretz, 15 March 1985.
- 106 Zu Haderekh, 18 December 1985.
- 107 New Outlook, May 1983.
- 108 Ha'aretz Supplement, 29 July 1983.
- 109 Pp. 349-354.
- 110 Ha'aretz Supplement, 9 January 1981.
- 111 Zu Haderekh, 29 January 1986.
- 112 Al-'Awdah, 30 January 1986.
- 113 Direct Line, May 1986.
- 114 'Al Hamishmar, 27 February 1986.
- 115 Al- Mirsad, 27 August 1986.

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- 116 The opening verses of the poem 'The Will to Live' from the collection Songs of Life.
- 117 Al-Mirsad, 7 January 1987.
- 118 Zu Haderekh, 10 June 1987.
- 119 Ha'aretz, 12 June 1987.
- 120 Palestine al-Thawra, 20 June 1987.
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 Ha'aretz, 19 June 1987.
- 123 The Jerusalem Post, 5 July 1988.
- 124 Middle East International, 20 October 1989.
- 125 Palestine al-Thawra, 16 July 1989, Kul al-'Arab, 12 July 1989, Zu Haderekh, 12 July 1989, Ha'olam Hazze, 12 July 1989.
- 126 Ha'aretz, 1 November 1986.
- 127 22 July 1987.
- 128 9 August 1987.
- 129 5 October 1986.
- 130 17 February 1988.
- 131 Zu Haderekh, 24 February 1988.
- 132 1 April 1988.
- 133 Ha'aretz, 1 April 1988.
- 134 Zu Haderekh, 12 April 1989 and 31 May 1989.
- 135 Palestine al-Thawra, 21 May 1989.
- 136 Yoel Markus, Ha'aretz, 4 February 1983.
- 137 The Guardian, 3 May 1983, 19.
- 138 The Times, 22 April 1983.
- 139 Hadashot, 8 May 1987.
- 140 The Guardian, 15 August 1989.

## APPENDIX I TRANSIT CAMPS: MA'BAROT

To throw more light on the suffering of the Sephardim in these 'Ma'barot', we will quote here the stories of two people.

### NA'IM 'ABDUSH

They settled my uncle Menahem and his family, and my grandmother Kehela, in Har Tuv camp in the Jerusalem district. My grandmother had lost two sons in the First World War and was blind. She was unable to deal with the biting cold in the tent and fell ill and died. Subsequently, Uncle Menahem took his family to one of the slum areas in Tel Aviv where he tried to start up the same type of business he had carried on in Baghdad, but he came up against numerous difficulties as a result of which he had a heart attack and died when he was forty-eight (his father had lived to be eighty in Baghdad), leaving behind a widow and ten children.

My father lived in Petah Tikvah Camp for ten years, until he died in his hut. Samra, my paternal grandmother, was placed in Pardes Hanna Camp on her own and she remained there until she died a few years later at over one hundred years of age. My sister Lulu was settled in Saqiya Camp until her husband took to drink and gambling and the family fell apart. The rest of the family was ripped apart as follows: my sister, Marcelle, and her family were sent to Tel Mond Camp. Ten years later her husband died of a heart attack which was a result of the hard agricultural labour he had to do. My uncle, Salim, was sent to Khairiya Camp. He had been a senior civil servant in Baghdad, but stayed unemployed for the rest of his life. His grandson committed suicide in 1989, as a result of racist harassment in the army. Uncle Ya'qov refused to emigrate and stayed in Iraq until he died, but his family was settled in one of the camps - I don't know which one! I don't remember which camp the wife of my uncle Tsiyon was sent to. My aunt Rosa and her family went to Lod Camp and I never saw her again! I don't know which camp aunt Baliha and her family went to. My aunt Najiya and her family were sent to Ra'anana Camp where her middle-aged husband died. Uncle Avraham and his family went to a camp near Haifa, I'm not sure which one exactly! Uncle Kabi and his family went to a camp in the coastal plain. The children of my father's uncle were split up amongst different camps. Had the whole family been settled in the same camp we could have made up a commando squadron to defend our interests!

### JIHAD KHEDOURIE

'When I was nine years old, in 1941, fascist gangs in Baghdad attacked and looted our house. Our family was almost killed. Those incidents affected me, and I was happy to immigrate to Israel in 1950. As soon as I got to the Sha'ar Ha'aliya Camp I was conscripted, but I did not object. During my military service Ashkenazi officers would treat me and other Sephardim like slaves. I was well-known for my temper in Baghdad ... I would not accept that! We used to curse the officers whenever they humiliated us. Eventually I came to the conclusion that this is a colonialist state which oppresses Sephardim and Palestinians and which in turn would be finished off by the Arab nation. I cursed the state whenever they wronged me or my mates. At one point they took my unit to the Egyptian border and demanded that we

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attack an Egyptian position. We said that the Egyptians had not carried out any hostile actions against us, and that we did not wish to start a new war. The Ashkenazi officers seethed and threatened us with guns, but got nowhere and we returned to the military camp. One morning an officer came to wake me up, and started treating me rudely, so I spat in his face. Following this, a number of officers beat me up quite badly. When I finished my military service I refused to do reserve duty, I would tear up the military call-up order and tell them that I had not received it. An officer from the Reserves came and asked me "Don't you want to serve the flag?" to which I replied "It's your flag, not mine!" I lived for a while in one of the transit camps near some Arab villages and started going to one of the villages and would sit in the coffee shop and talk to the Palestinians - in Arabic naturally. I became friends with them, and they liked me. I was happy there. But then a secret policeman paid me a visit and demanded that I desist from those visits, for security reasons . . . I refused. I bought a room in Tel Aviv and I would let the villagers come and sleep on the floor when they came to work in Tel Aviv, but the police warned me that it was against Israel's security interests. I told them to go to hell. In the end they trumped up a charge against me and I was sent to jail. At that time I decided that I would not live in Israel any more. So I went off to Europe, and after a few days an Israeli Jew I knew approached me and asked if he could put his suitcase in my room for a few hours. After he left the room, the police came and looked through everything . . . They opened the suitcase and found drugs. They did not believe what I told them, and I was put in prison for a second time. After that I returned to Israel against my will, but I decided not to recognise Israel or to pay any taxes. I had bought a little piece of land near that camp, and the municipality sent a tax demand. I refused to pay it and they put me in prison. I refused again and they imprisoned me again . . .'

I lost contact with Jihad, but his sister Su'ad continued his tale: 'After he had been put in prison a number of times, he had a nervous breakdown, became apathetic and depressed. He did not work and would speak only occasionally. He did not visit his family and spurned marriage, preferring to be left completely alone. He became an ascetic like Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri.<sup>1</sup> Finally in 1982, aged 48, he had a heart attack, and his neighbours took him to the Ichiliv hospital in Tel Aviv. When the doctors saw that he did not belong to the Sick Fund or any other health plan, they sent him home where a few hours later he was found dead.'

We shall finish this discussion of the camps by quoting the words of camp residents, in the novel Hama'bara by Shimon Balas, which we have referred to previously. The theme of this true story is the struggle of the Iraqi transit camp residents to elect a committee to represent their interests to the authorities. Balas describes the bloody clashes between Sephardim on the one hand, and the police, hired ruffians and the Ashkenazi camp director on the other. The violent confrontation ends with the defeat of the police. Women from Baghdad participated in this battle by throwing mud at the police. There follows some of fragments of conversations which take place among the camp residents:

Woman: God doesn't listen to us . . .

David: The god of Israel is Ashkenazi too . . .<sup>3</sup>

A Mother: Abroad (i.e. in Iraq) you could bring up children. Here everything is up the spout. What camp children stay at home? Is this shack what you call a house?

That's why they're never here . . .<sup>4</sup>

Abu Nu'man: If you have no work, with all due respect, you don't even get looked up to by a dog. Anyway, listen to me. I have lived longer than you and I can tell you that life in those days was more decent. (Abu Nu'man had been a merchant

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who travelled around the Iraqi countryside.) Whenever I came to a Muslim village, the men and women would rush to tell the Sheikh that Ezra the Jew had arrived. The Sheikh would receive me in his guest room and would put me up in his house as long as I had business in the area.<sup>5</sup>

When a government doctor came and ordered a villager to hospital for an operation, the villagers would say, 'Let's ask Ezra first.'<sup>6</sup>

A resident: All the heart disease and the sudden deaths at an early age are due to our way of life . . .<sup>7</sup>

'Eini: It seems to me that since the days of the Babylonian exile, Mesopotamian Jews have suffered no catastrophe as awful as the one which has been visited upon us. That old and enlightened Judaism has been trampled into the earth and scattered over the arid and muddy lands which they call 'transit camps'. I said to the camp administrator, 'How long do you intend to treat us like your slaves?'<sup>8</sup>

This is our fate . . . they have trampled on our dignity. Everything is topsy-turvy, our values and dignity crushed . . .<sup>9</sup>

My family was well-known in Iraq. We used to mix with ministers, senators and sheikhs. When I entered the Sheikh's reception room, everyone would stand up. Who knows me here? I'm just a peasant here.<sup>10</sup>

A woman: Moshe ate some cheese from the dustbin, and his stomach is hurting him now...<sup>11</sup>

Wife: Na'im the baker's wife gave birth to a still-born child, it was too muddy for the doctor to come to the camp.<sup>12</sup>

Hayyim: Who will make peace with the Arab countries? The Ashkenazim? No - we will. Who know who the Arabs are. We can speak to them. They'll listen to us and trust us. That's what we'll do, Abu-Suhayl - not just sit in transit camps.<sup>13</sup>

Yosef: The judge is the tool of the authorities, just like the police. Except that the police are a violent tool, but the court covers up crime and violence in the name of law and justice.<sup>14</sup>

Meir: You and your friends still think things are going to get better. I stopped believing that a long time ago. The communists write and speak about 'Work Opportunities' and 'Housing Opportunities' . . . Just who's going to give that to us? The Jewish Agency? The Histadrut, the Knesset, who? Yes. They're all against you.<sup>15</sup>

Abu Nu'man (to the Zionists): You made our lives hell in Iraq. We had been independent there, living by the sweat of our brows. We were our own masters until you brought us this catastrophic Palestine thing of yours. You said we had to get up, leave everything and come here . . . And what did you do? We got up and came - to graveyards.<sup>16</sup>

Nu'man: Bear up, father. Bear up.<sup>17</sup>

Abu Nu'man: Why should I? Is this a life? (He sits upright and grimaces)

Nu'man: Don't you feel well?

Abu Nu'man: My back is hurting me. We worked in the rain yesterday.<sup>18</sup>

Hayyim: Madness reigned over the camp. There were quarrels, fights, disturbances, police! The labour office was shut . . . The Ashkenazim are laughing at us. They say that we Iraqis are primitive. The Ashkenazim who are not worth two-pence in their own countries - they come here and lord it over us.<sup>19</sup>

Avraham told me that the director of his camp used to stir up sectarian quarrels amongst the Iraqis and the Moroccans, between the Jews from Mosul and the Kurds. There were disturbances every day. Then Avraham gathered together the leaders of the communities and formed a committee. The committee members marched up to the camp director and informed him: 'We are the camp administration'. He jumped into his car and sped off and he came back with the police . . .<sup>20</sup>

Moshe: (singing) They led us here like cattle

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They brought us to the black camp  
They taught us how to build  
And we were as blind as beetles.<sup>21</sup>

Hayyim: The parties share us out. . . there is an abundance of parties in this country.  
But let me ask you, who are the heads of these parties? The same Ashkenazim who despise us.<sup>22</sup>

Camp Director: You are primitive people. You don't know how to run your own affairs.  
You have no concept of what a democratic way of life is. You just know how to stab people in the back.

Yosef: That is an insult and a blatant fabrication. Who stabs whom in the back? Us or him? Who sent Ya'kov and Shafiq and hired bullies from other camps to come and attack us on the Sabbath?<sup>23</sup>

### NOTES

1 She is referring to Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri (973-1057), outspoken poet and author. He was born just outside Aleppo, visited Baghdad and returned to his village where he retired to his house. He became blind and lived in a permanent state of fasting. His most famous work was the Epistle of Forgiveness.

2 Pp. 67 and 102.

3 P. 16.

4 P. 29.

5 P. 34.

6 P. 35.

7 P. 50.

8 P. 51.

9 P. 54.

10 P. 52.

11 P. 58.

12 P. 96-97.

13 P. 102.

14 P. 109.

15 P. 109.

16 'Graveyards' in Arabic (maqabir) is a pun on 'Transit Camps' (ma'abir).

17 P. 119.

18 P. 120.

19 P. 128.

20 P. 130.

21 P. 146.

22 P. 149.

23 P. 184.

## APPENDIX II

### KIRYAT SHEMONAH: A DEVELOPMENT TOWN ON THE LEBANESE BORDER

In his book (1981), Dr Shlomo Swirski quotes conversations with residents of Kiryat Shemonah, from which the following are extracted.

M: My brother-in-law came to Israel in 1948, but he left because of the discrimination . . . my daughter has told me to change our Moroccan surname because it is stopping her getting on. She wants us to have a nice Russian name. We do not differentiate between Ashkenazim and Sephardim. There is an Ashkenazi man in our town and we voted for him.

D: Why does the government not institute the plan for the industrial development of the Upper Galilee in Kiryat Shemonah instead of in the kibbutzim which already have vast landholdings and factories?

B: I worked for kibbutzim for 18 years and then was fired because I objected to the way they snatched up the lands of the Hula. All the money invested in the town goes straight into the pockets of the kibbutzim and not to residents of the town. G: A shirt costs 500 Israeli pounds here, and 150 Israeli pounds in Tel Aviv. Trousers cost 1200 Israeli pounds here, and 300 Israeli pounds in Haifa. I have to go to Tel Aviv tomorrow to buy the basics for my family. I'll lose a whole day's work and the travel expenses. We had an Ashkenazi committee chairman. They arranged a party for him and gave him presents - a calculator, a lump sum, and the post of project director in one of the branches of the company. They gave him a car and doubled his current salary. Why? Because they discovered that he had been embezzling, and they wanted to cover it up. And we had followed him like sheep, trusted him, and now they have appointed a new Ashkenazi who knows nothing about the project. Why don't they appoint one of us . . . someone who has worked here for 18 years? That's discrimination. Once, they promoted one of us who then started to help us. The director said to him, 'Are you with us or with them?' S: Since the kibbutzim preached socialism and were non-exploitative, they resolved not to employ labour in any settlement. But they established an industrial concern comprising all the settlements in the area, and that employed hired labourers. That's hypocrisy. Had they built the factories in the development towns it would have been a different matter. Once, we requested a car for one of our workers. The director said to us, 'The budget won't allow it.' Then they appointed an Ashkenazi kibbutz member and gave him a Renault 12. The Russian and Polish Jews who rule this state are out for themselves ... Is this a democracy? Democracy is a fine word, but if you have power and authority you can do what you like. B: They told the people who came from the Yemen, Iraq and North Africa that the culture they brought from those countries was worthless. They destroyed the system whereby the father was the head of the family. Then they gave Sephardim all sorts of bad names, such as 'Morocco Sakkin'<sup>1</sup> implying that we are all criminals and murderers.

S: The kibbutz kids have lots of educational opportunities . . . our kids have only one - to do labouring jobs.

B: The Black Panthers proved that the government has a policy of divide and rule. G: Why doesn't the government bring higher education and technological jobs to our town? Why does the government only give benefits to people who leave the large towns to come and live in Kiryat Shemonah,<sup>2</sup> but we the residents get nothing.



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That type of discrimination will lead to civil war. How is that suicide, crime and prostitution only take place among Sephardim?

D: Why do you think?

G: Because the government, whether it's Labour or Likud, created this social gulf through discrimination. These days people don't just think of leaving Kiryat Shemonah but Israel too. Three workers from our plant got redundancy money and left the country. Then there is the man who is taking his seven children to France . . .

M: Why do they ask us in the army where your father is from?

G: In the army all the cooks, chauffeurs and sanitary workers are Moroccans. Why is that? I don't have the strength any more to carry on the political fight for equality. I go to work every day at three in the morning and don't finish until six at night. My average day is between 14 and 15 hours, including overtime. In spite of that my wages only last for 15 days out of the month. The rest of the month I have to borrow. They've fixed my life so that I don't have any free time for political activity. What's more, we are not united.

M: When they see us try and unite, the policy of divide and rule starts. I was travelling with the union secretary who said to me, 'Give up that nonsense. I'll speak to so and so and get you a job . . . Come to your senses!' So they tried to get me over to their side. Naturally some people are weak . . . Once they reduced my employment hours and I asked the committee chairman for help. He went to the manager who told him, 'If you leave the committee I'll give you a nice job.' So he left the committee. See how they divide us! We had committees going in Galilee, Haifa, and Bet She'an, but they were all broken by graft.

G: We have to use violence and stage demonstrations like they did in Wadi al-Salib in Haifa.<sup>3</sup> If you don't turn the wheel by hand, the cart will not move. We must use force to put an end to the discrimination against us. It's got to change. We need someone to unite us.

M: We have got to get rid of the director who bribed the committee chairman, in order to foil his divide and rule policy.

G: You need money, time and strength. You don't have that strength. Neither the government or its economic policy will allow you to be strong. So you can't fight them. If you do, they'll arrest you for something. Look what they did to poor Peretz. He was only acting for the workers.<sup>4</sup> When David Ben Harush organized the demonstrations in Wadi al-Salib in Haifa they tried to buy him off. When we started to strike, they sent the police against us. But the police from Kiryat Shemonah and Safad refused to use force. Then they sent the police from Shfar'am against us. They brought in the minorities [i.e. the Druze police].

M: Look at Charlie Biton, the head of Black Panthers. He went around looking for a party which would help him and joined the communists.

MN: Why don't we get together and fight for our town. And you, G! You've got influence in the committee - you head the struggle.

G: I don't have any strength. The Histadrut is over me, and if the Histadrut doesn't help me and the workers abandon me, what can I do on my own?

B: I understand, a member of the workers' committee is just a person with problems and children to bring up. If he's got five or six children and no salary, and limited opportunities, even if he has noble views . . . how can he help the workers and live as well if the struggle were to last two years? Naturally, everything would fall apart piece by piece.

A: In spite of G's influence on the committee, he cannot depend on his comrades, because they'd abandon him if they were given money and their conditions were improved.

G: They tell us 'Well go then, go back to Morocco. We have Arab workers and

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don't need you!' They have no regard for union agreements. When we go to the Histadrut they tell us that they have to form a committee to look into the matter. I suggested to them that we take over the administration of the plant ourselves. They said that would just lead to the failure of the plant.

D: That's just a sign of weakness. The solution is to persist until we eventually succeed.

A: We need internal organization in order to change the conditions.

B: In 1977 the development towns voted Likud, thinking they would help us. But Likud is worse than the previous party. The rich have just got richer.

A: Comrades, we have to accept the situation as it is. There is no solution.

B: No, don't say that.

M: Here in Israel everyone is out for himself.

A: If we don't unite, it'll just go on like this.

G: Our organization cannot just be local.

A: It will need money.

M: They'll stop you getting it.

A: We'll never have time and money, because we are workers.

B: We need a leader like the leader of the blacks in America who was killed.

D: You mean you want them to assassinate us (laughter) . . .

G: Suppose we establish an organization, and we organize demonstrations and meetings, and then they throw me in prison on some pretext. Who'll defend me? That's what they did to the Sephardi leader Peretz. They put him in prison and we don't hear anything about him. He's sitting silent now because he has ascertained that silence is better.

D: Are you going to organize demonstrations for him?

G: I supported him, but a demonstration . . .

D: No. The problem is that we only supported him in our thoughts.

G: That doesn't cost anything. If we had had a half-day strike for him here and in Bet She'an and Ma'alot, that would have constituted strength.

M: If they thought that you could organize a strike, they wouldn't try and harm you ... on the contrary, they'd be afraid of you, they'd know that you are strong.

G: They'd invent some legal clause showing that you were against the state.

D: People will gain strength when they believe in themselves. The only way forward is to be self-confident and to organize for the struggle. If the organization comes from outside it will be no use.

G: It's no use anyway. They will destroy us economically. They use bribes and inducements to break us. We have to have one aim - power.<sup>5</sup>

## NOTES

1 Literally, 'knife-wielding Moroccan.'

2 I.e. migrating Ashkenazim, e.g., teachers, managers, etc..

3 See chapter ten.

4 Peretz was a Moroccan who challenged the Histadrut and organized a general strike in the port of Ashdod - which was broken.

5 P 104-118.

## APPENDIX III DEVELOPMENT TOWNS

### SHLOMI

This town in the Galilee was established in 1949 to house Tunisian, Moroccan, Yemenite and Bulgarian immigrants. David Oren says in his report that if we were to compare economic development in the neighbouring Ashkenazi settlements to the situation in this town, we would have to conclude that development here is zero. This is why 40 percent of the town's residents have left since 1961. The establishment had hoped to settle 15,000 people here, but they only managed to settle 3,000. Homes are in a state of neglect and most people work outside the town, earning low wages compared to the big towns, that is £90 a month. The reductions in services have only made things much worse. People suffer from unemployment and there are no opportunities for the young generation or those just out of the army. There is no cinema in the town, no ambulance and no decent air-raid shelter; the few shelters that exist are full of rubbish. The residents complain of government discrimination in the way money is invested in the local economy, and threaten to end the Labour Party's control of the local council. The authorities brought over these Sephardim to provide cheap labour for the neighbouring Ashkenazi settlements, which have got rich on it. This led to 47 percent of the town's residents voting for the Likud bloc in the 1981 elections as a provocation to the bosses on the settlements who belonged to the Labour Party, which only won 27 percent of the vote. In the 1977 elections the majority voted for the Labour Party, and the Likud government therefore refused to include the town in the relief project for poor neighbourhoods. The article stresses that the government has spent money on Ashkenazi settlement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip instead of helping Shlomi. A group of women reacted by starting a self-help project. Then the Sephardi Oded organization (see chapter ten) started to help the town, but the government foiled both plans because it wants the town to remain subservient.

### KIRYAT YAM

By 1986 the debts of this town of 3,600 had reached 600,000 New Shekels, 90 percent of which, according to the mayor, were interest repayments to the banks. The mayor also stated that the problem had not been solved by a reduction in services. In the past the town paid wages on the fourth of every month, then on the ninth, then employees were forced to pay the interest on the overdrafts. Now the banks refuse credit to municipal employees because the town cannot make the interest repayments. On 13 January 1986 the employees went on strike, staged a stormy demonstration and blocked off the main road. They sent a delegation to Jerusalem where they demonstrated in front of government buildings, met the Minister of the Interior and heard the usual promises.<sup>2</sup>

### YERUHAM

This town to the south of Beer Sheba was founded in 1951. According to research figures published by the Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheba in 1980, Yeruham is one of the poorest development towns. 30 percent of its residents leave every

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year, including 80 percent of those just out of the army. The town is full of garbage and its houses are dreadful. Private industry uses its inhabitants as a pool of cheap labour, and thus the standard of living is low. Due to the poor school facilities, many teachers refuse to teach at its school, so the Ministry of Education uses unqualified teachers including soldiers.<sup>3</sup> On 28 November 1980 Ha'aretz reported that 1,000 people leave the town every year.

Reports published in the Israeli newspapers at the end of 1984 stated that the town's population was between 6,500 and 7,000, including 700 unemployed. This caused an increase in demonstrations and acts of violence against the authorities. The town hall was set on fire. The Sephardi Jews of the town threatened to return their army reserve - and identity-cards to the authorities. The reasons for the uprising were as follows:

1. Lack of food in the shops.
2. Shortage of teachers in the schools.
3. No local doctor.
4. The dismissal of the local headmaster.
5. Dismissals and unemployment.
6. The abject poverty: 50 percent of the residents require welfare payments, including 25 percent who receive welfare permanently.

There is no bakery in the town, no shop and no garage. Doctors and teachers refuse to live there. Moroccans form 50 percent of the inhabitants, the remainder being Iranians, Indians and some Rumanians together with their Israeli-born children. The economic base of the town is weak. It is far from the main highway and the industrial and agricultural centres. The residents elected an emergency committee to fight for their rights, which was joined by Charlie Biton, leader of the Black Panthers and a member of the Knesset.<sup>4</sup>

The government wanted to house 60 Ethiopian families in this town, but Barukh al-Muqayyis, the head of the local council, refused to accept them because of the rampant unemployment affecting two-thirds of the employees. Al-Muqayyis stated that it was up to the government to house the Ethiopians on Ashkenazi kibbutzim where there was no unemployment.<sup>5</sup>

Members of the local council joined the popular uprisings against the authorities, protesting against the lack of work and their overdue wages. A correspondent of Zu Haderekh, Miriam Galili, spoke to some of the residents about this, and there follows an abridgement of her article which appeared on 26 December 1984. Rahel 'Amman She is divorced and has to feed four children. Her father is paralysed and has a heart condition. She is out of work even though she has qualifications and experience. She lost her job two years ago and received no unemployment benefits for six months. She said bitterly, 'I feel like a dead person. It seems that we are just good for military service and nothing else . . .

Meir Shim'oni: Worked as a policeman for 25 years, and has been out of work for a year and a half. His wife is also out of a job. He was appointed as an inspector in the town and then was dismissed. Shim'oni wonders, 'why do they send people to this town when there is no work for them here?'

A youth: Said that the ruling establishment set up development towns in the Negev for strategic reasons to do with Egypt. After the peace treaty, the government started channelling funds into the colonies on the occupied West Bank. There are ten students from the town at university, but they have no future in the town. S. Peretz: Father of four children, his wife is disabled. He says that in spite of the existence of skilled workers in the town, 70 percent of the labour on projects in the area is from elsewhere. Esther Amslan: 22 years old. Completed three courses at the College of Technology.

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Currently unemployed.

Tamar Omar: 20 years old. Unemployed even though she has finished secondary school. Her three unemployed brothers have left the town. She is thinking about leaving too.

Shim'on: Completed his army service, and has been unemployed for two year. He says 'What do I do? I bum around the streets and eat melon seeds!'

Tsippora Za'afрани: mother of seven. She works only four days a week. Her husband is out of work. Her daughter has finished her army service and is now unemployed.

The mayor, Barukh al-Muqayyis says that the number of unemployed has reached 700, and that between 180 and 200 of those who finish the army each year cannot find work and are forced to leave the town. He blames the government bureaucracy which gives preference to the colonisation of the West Bank. He adds that industry in the area is deteriorating, the plastics factory has shut down, the Venezia Factory is in an unsettled state, the Ackerstein tobacco factory is in danger of having to close, and sales are slow at the Negev Ceramics and Tamruqe Leggis factories. Al-Muqayyis had received members of the unemployment committee and discussed the possibility of staging demonstrations in front of the Knesset. Asi Armah, leader of the popular protest in the town, said that the unemployment crisis started two years ago. I would add to that 28 years of economic stagnation.

On 30 March 1986 the Ha'aretz wrote that Minister of Absorption, Ya'akov Tsur, had developed a programme to absorb Ashkenazim from South Africa whereby each family was to receive a \$40,000 mortgage. Avraham Asis abjured this policy in his letter to the newspaper, and asked 'What about the unemployed in Yeruham?' In his letter published in Zu Haderekh on 26 March 1986, Sammy Harush states that he is married with two children. His family came from Morocco and he is a driver of heavy machinery, but that he has been dismissed four times. Then he wonders where the Histadrut is and why it does not stand up for him. He concludes that the whole of the government apparatus, from top to bottom, is built on lies.

In April 1986, the protest movement of the Sephardim in Yeruham reached its zenith, particularly in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Charlie Biton travelled to Yeruham and took part in the Sephardim's demonstrations there and gave a speech in which he said 'We must stir up the government, and work against it with means stronger than the Black Panthers.' He condemned the channelling of the state budget towards the Ashkenazi settlements which are colonizing the occupied West Bank. He appealed to the inhabitants of development towns to shut down their towns, to block off the roads and to march on Jerusalem so that the government would not be able to ignore their existence.<sup>6</sup> The residents of Yeruham sent 36 local leaders to demonstrate in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and they staged a general strike in the town. Then the strikes spread until they included development towns in the north and south, who struck for two hours in solidarity with the residents of Yeruham. Mordechai Artzieli, a correspondent of Ha'aretz, wrote in his report on the protest movement that there had been 35,000 residents in this town, but that there were now only 6,200 left. 1,000 people were leaving every year. University students from Yeruham are ashamed to admit where they come from, and army officers serving in the area refuse to settle there. He concluded that 'Yeruham has no future, and there is no hope that it may have a future.'<sup>7</sup>

David Mesiqi, Secretary of the Trade Unions in the town said, 'The government has decreased the apparatus of local government throughout the country by 3 percent. But in Yeruham 25 percent of local government employees have been dismissed.'<sup>8</sup> The aim of these dismissals was to avoid having to lay off Ashkenazim in the large towns. In the protest movement of 1985, many residents of this town called for separation from Israel.<sup>9</sup>

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In his conversation with T. Dekel,<sup>10</sup> Mayor B. al-Muqayyis demanded the return of the occupied territories to their owners. He opposed the occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, and the attempts at occupying Beirut. He supported an international conference to find a permanent solution to the strife. Al-Muqayyis is from Morocco. He studied economics at Bar Ilan University, and is currently a member of the central committee of the Labour Party. He was troubled when he saw the arrogance of the occupiers in Gaza after the Six Day War of 1967, and how they intimidated Arab business owners into selling at low prices. 'I felt like dreadful,' he said. Al-Muqayyis said that in spite of Israel's victories, it will always lose. 'We must understand that the correct way forward is through negotiations, and we must not keep looking backwards. The crux is that we must love life and people.' Al-Muqayyis objected to the common opinion that Arab women are not affected by the death of one of their sons, because they have many others. Al-Muqayyis supported the principle of compromise and coexistence with the Palestinian Arab people. He suggested that the Jewish masses need to be appraised of the fact that the Palestinian people must be respected. Al-Muqayyis said that 85 percent of the residents of his town voted for Likud, but when he discussed the matter with them, they were convinced of the correctness of a policy of peace. Then it turned out that they do not support Labour, not because of its left-wing views, but because it is an anti-Sephardi party of Ashkenazim. Al-Muqayyis said that even though his family was right-wing, his father always spoke about the good relations they had with Arabs (in Morocco). He added that from a young age he learnt to confront the sectarian problem, his colour, his Arab name and his second class citizenship. The Sephardim were cannon-fodder, proletarianised and subjected to attacks for being religious. Since becoming active in the 'Oded' campaign (see chapter ten), he believes in positive action and severely criticises Ashkenazi religious fanaticism imported from Eastern Europe. He calls for a return to the 1948 borders, the opening of Israel's borders with the Arab world, the dismantling of barriers, peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance.

## DIMONAH

Founded in 1955 to absorb Moroccans. Mordechai Artzieli's article in Ha'aretz on 19 September 1980 states that these Moroccans were taken off the ship and put into two trucks. They were told that they were being taken on a half-hour journey from Haifa to a new town. The trucks did not stop for eight hours. When they arrived at the spot in the Negev desert they were greeted by a fierce sand storm. They could see no houses there, and refused to get down from the trucks. After a sharp dispute they got out and were housed in simple huts with iron beds, cheap blankets and straw mattresses. The huts had no water or electricity, and there were primitive outdoor toilets. They lived in those huts until they managed to build their own flats with a floor area of 48m<sup>2</sup>. Teenagers were conscripted immediately. The 30,000 inhabitants of Dimonah suffered from abject poverty. Their dreadful houses were like uniform cement boxes. The quality of life was the very lowest with filth piling up everywhere. The town suffered from chronic and violent juvenile delinquency involving recently the use of hand grenades. The youth of the town has no social or vocational opportunities, since work in the textile mills is just about the only work in the town. Most of the youth are unemployed.

In its edition of 24 February 1980, The Jerusalem Post wrote that the monthly wage at the Kitan Textile Factory was between £41 and £80 sterling, the lowest wages in Israel. The standard of education is also very poor due to a lack of continuity among the teaching staff. Ha'aretz wrote that conditions in Dimonah are considered to be

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better than those prevailing in other development towns such as Yeruham and Mitzpeh Ramon. Dimonah is termed as a 'jewel among the development towns', and the article concludes that Dimonah represents the failure of the state in this sphere. On 1 January 1982, David Oren published an article in Ha'aretz about the family of Pinhas Albaz who live in Dimonah. The following is a summary:

Pinhas left school nearly-illiterate at the age of eleven. His family had come from Casablanca, where his father worked in a lottery office. They were quite well-off. In Dimonah they have undergone many hardships. His father dislikes the prevailing social relations in the town, such as permissiveness and rudeness, the neglect of traditional values and the lack of respect for parents and elders. He also dislikes the overcrowded living conditions, and the isolation and the alienation of a remote development town. He complains about his livelihood - the fact that in order to earn a living he has to work as a labourer by day and a guard by night. His son Pinhas says that he left school because the teachers did not care about him. He would play truant, but the authorities paid no attention. Finally he left school to help his poor family. His brother was sent to a religious school to reduce the number of mouths in the house. His older sister was sent out to work, whereas his second sister stayed at home to help out with the housework. His third sister went to school. After a while his older sister turned to prostitution. The father was overcome with despair and took to drink until he was killed in a car accident. At that time Pinhas started to believe that the ruling establishment was Ashkenazi and that Moroccans were considered an inferior race. He thought that Ashkenazi Jews passed their time in the cafes on the beach in Tel Aviv and that they were destroying the Moroccans who lived in the slums of Dimonah deprived of everything except dirt and sand. In his eyes and the eyes of his friends, Dimonah was nothing more than a graveyard in the middle of nowhere, with no future. Pinhas said that the waves of Sephardi resistance had not yet started. Then he stated unambiguously 'I hate the state of Israel, I hate the army. I hate them all. When I get out of the army I am going to leave the country. I hate the Ashkenazim and don't wish to talk to them. I have read what Shlomo Tsadok wrote about Sephardi armed struggle against the Ashkenazim, and I am with him. There are thousands of kids like me.'<sup>11</sup> When he was fifteen, Shlomo was sent to a religious school in Britain, but he left it and stayed in London in the hope of avoiding army service. He continued, 'We used to poke fun at the Sephardim who were conscripted. We'd ask them "Why? What has the state of Israel done for you?" Moreover, I felt no compulsion to sacrifice myself for this state, because I didn't feel part of it.' Pinhas stayed in London for four years and no one ever asked him whether he was Ashkenazi or Moroccan. When his visa expired, he had to go back and join the army. Since the army could not make use of him because he was illiterate, the military authorities started teaching him to read and write. His little brother has already become a delinquent.

David Oren, the author of the article, asked David Burkan, the local social work inspector, about the fate of young people like Pinhas. The inspector replied that the state has failed to make 'those people' citizens, due to bad education, the lack of relations between them and the social workers, the arrogance of civil servants and their feelings of racial superiority toward Sephardim.

I do not know what happened to Pinhas after that article appeared. However I do know that kids like him get killed during their military service, or end up doing long sentences in military jails, then they return to civilian life with no jobs.

By 1984 the local council's debts in Dimonah had reached 290 million shekels. As for the youngsters who managed to attain higher education, the mayor remarked 'How can I ask university graduates to come and work in textile factories when

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members of the Ashkenazi settlement, Ma'aleh Adumim, in the occupied lands, work with computers?' Most of the inhabitants vote for Likud as a protest against what happened to them under Labour Party rule.<sup>12</sup>

Yosef Alghazi wrote in an article in *Zu Haderekh*<sup>13</sup> that unemployment and despair have made the inhabitants turn to drink and other intoxicants. There were seven alcohol-related deaths in 1985 alone.

### SHDEROT

The most important projects employing the inhabitants of this town are the Sha'ar Hanegev Projects which are owned by the neighbouring kibbutzim. Due to burgeoning unemployment, the employees of the 'Of Kur' factory have had to relinquish some of their rights and to work a four-day week<sup>14</sup>. Overtime pay has been reduced from 131-157 percent to 125-150 percent, and wages have gone down 25 percent. Moreover, wages have gone down in real terms too because of inflation. As a result of all this, the workers resorted to a strike and won a five-day week. There are approximately 170 workers in this factory, most of whom live in Shderot or the Gaza Strip. Women are 60 percent of the work force, and most of the workers have between three and five children. The aforementioned newspaper article stated that their wages do not suffice for their bare necessities and are spent before the end of the month. Unemployment and resentment are destroying the residents' morale. The secretary of the Workers' Committee described Shderot as 'a black town in the United States' at the turn of the century. He said that there was now between 16 percent and 20 percent unemployment amongst heads of large families. There are 2700 heads of family, out of whom 1070 are out of work, and the young people who leave the town to study elsewhere do not return.

### OFAKIM AND NETIVOT

These two towns are in the Negev. They depend on the low-paying textile industry. The industrial project there is called 'Keshet' and the residents live under threat of dismissal and unemployment.<sup>15</sup>

On 9 January 1981 Ha'aretz reported that the OP-AR factory in Ofakim would shortly shut down. That meant that 460 workers would be laid off. The workers thus flocked to Jerusalem to demonstrate in front of the Knesset. Ofakim was founded in the fifties and settled by Moroccan immigrants. Residents of both towns were used by the neighbouring Ashkenazi settlements as a pool of unskilled labour. By 1981 50 percent of the inhabitants were working in the textile industry, but this then went down to 20 percent because Palestinians from the Gaza Strip were employed. In spite of the abject poverty prevailing in the Ofakim, housing is more expensive than in the old-rich settlement of Rehovot, where a flat costs 270,000 shekels. The same costs 320,000 shekels in Ofakim. For the same reasons as in other development towns, 2500 of the residents voted for Likud, while the Labour Party only got 1200 votes.<sup>16</sup>

Netivot has chronic unemployment, and protest has become fiercer.<sup>17</sup> Demonstrations took place throughout 1985 as the number of unemployed reached 300. Yosef Eno, head of the local council, and Yosef Shawqi, one of the trade union stewards, warned that unemployment was endemic. Hesqel Yegna, the town's trade union chief, demanded that more money be invested in the town, and not in the occupied territories. The mayor of Beer Sheva, Eliahu Nawi, demanded the transfer of factories to the Negev.<sup>18</sup> A. Dahhan from Ofakim stated to a reporter from



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Ha'aretz<sup>19</sup> that 'this place is shit. Stay until dark and you will see that everything is dead.' A. Vaqnin said that 'Ofakim is a graveyard for the living.' Then Dahhan added 'The whole place is falling apart.'

During the sixties, the OP-AR Textile factory employed more than 600 people. This was then cut back to 460, and at the beginning of the eighties it was further pared down to 380. Currently it only employs 160 workers. At the end of May 1986 workers were not paid. They went on strike and demonstrated. Then they went and demonstrated in front of the Knesset in Jerusalem. Had they not received loans from the Histadrut they would have just been left to starve. The factory owner is an Ashkenazi called Yakobovitz. Abu Qasis, Union Secretary in Ofakim, stated that during 1985 three factories shut down, raising the number of unemployed to 220. During the coming month 60 young people just out of the army would swell their ranks. There are also 330 people who have only seasonal work.

At present Ofakim has 14,000 inhabitants. It was founded along with Shderot and Netivot in the northern Negev, on the Beer Sheba-Ashkelon axis. Unemployment causes most of the young people to leave the town.<sup>20</sup>

When the government announced that it was authorizing millions of dollars to establish six new settlements in the occupied territories, the head of the local council expressed his abhorrence for this policy and said that those who demand the establishment of settlements on the West Bank are the people who are causing unemployment in the development towns. He added that during the last six years 625 people have been laid off, and new jobs have only been found for 214 of them.<sup>21</sup>

### MITZPEH RAMON

This town too lies in the Negev, 85 kilometres from Beer Sheba. The planners wanted to settle 5,000 people here over the first five years, 25,000 within twenty years and then 50,000 within 30 years. The residents who settled there in 1955 were told that the economy of the town would be based on the natural resources found in the area of Ramon, and that it would become a centre for all the settlements of the area. The inhabitants suffered from a lack of water, which had to be trucked in. There was not a single doctor, nurse, teacher or shop. They were provided with no municipal services for a number of months. Thus, before the end of the first year, most of the residents fled from the town.<sup>22</sup> The ruling establishment then shipped in more immigrants and settled them in the empty residential units, but after a while these newcomers fled too. By the end of the ninth year the number of flats was just 800, half of which were empty. The lack of any means of earning a living pushed the residents into staging fierce demonstrations during which they raised black banners and closed down the main highway to Eilat.

At the beginning of 1986 the town had 3,800 inhabitants, but nine months later there were only 2,000. There are 1,600 residential units in the town, out of which 1,100 are standing empty, including 400 new units. The number of school pupils has gone down from 1,200 to 650 over the last three years. At the beginning of the 85/86 school year the secondary school lost 20 percent of its students. The dentist left town, leaving behind a general practitioner and a pediatrician. Most of the shops have been boarded up since their owners went away. After nightfall Mitzpeh Ramon is like a ghost town where fear descends on the streets. Most of the towns industrial concerns have shut down, and a large proportion of the owners and workers in the remaining small businesses live outside the town. Tension and anger are the prevailing emotions of the residents who have formed the 'leadership of the struggle' and have come up with the following points for action: 1. Close off the town and the roads leading to it.

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3. Demonstrate in Jerusalem.
4. Hunger and work strike.
5. Occupy the empty houses in the town which belong to the Ministry of Housing.
6. Demolish the empty houses in the town.
7. Demand reparations comparable to those paid to the Ashkenazi residents of Yamit.<sup>23</sup> (Yamit was an Ashkenazi settlement in the Egyptian occupied territory.)

### UPPER YOKNA'AM

Founded in 1950. By 1980 it had 5,500 inhabitants, 70 percent of whom were working in the Saltam factory. The town, which lies in the Haifa area, does not have an ambulance, a fire-engine, a street-cleaning machine or a constabulary to protect the residents from the gangs which have arisen in the slum districts. There is no cinema or coffee shop, and just one pharmacy which opened in 1980. The residents depend on the neighbouring Ashkenazi settlement of Tiv'on for all these services.

In the vicinity of the town there is a small Ashkenazi settlement, with 450 people, which controls Upper Yokna'am. It is called 'Upper' to 'throw the enemy off, as they say in the Israeli army. The Ashkenazi settlers treat the Sephardim from Yokna'am with arrogance and naturally there is animosity between the communities. After the Iranian Revolution, the Saltam factory lost one of its export markets and had to lay off workers. The number of unemployed rose to 400 in 1980.<sup>24</sup> Since then unemployment has risen further, and resentment has grown. The annual turnover of the Saltam factory, the only one in the town, has dropped from \$150 million to \$50 million. The secretary of the trade union who issued these figures, Rafael Toledano, added that 500 workers had been laid off over the previous four months, and that according to management plans 300 others were about to be laid off.<sup>25</sup>

### BETH SHEMESH

This town lies in the district of Bab al-Wad, on the Jerusalem road. It was founded in 1948 as a transit camp for Moroccans. By 1981 it had 13,000 inhabitants. People there still recall in anger how the Israeli establishment degraded those who had been members of the middle class in their country of origin, and how privileges helped Ashkenazi Jews raise their own station. The residents of Beth Shemesh also point out that the neighbouring Ashkenazi kibbutzim refuse to build schools where their children can all study together. They say that 'the Ashkenazim come to our town once every four years to try and get our vote in the elections.' Economic conditions do not differ from those in other development towns - unemployment, housing problems, bad housing stock etc.

These are the reasons why the ruling Labour Party, the party of the neighbouring Ashkenazi settlements, lost its majority in 1977. In 1981 Likud won 56 percent of the votes, whereas the Labour vote went down from 35 percent to 22 percent.

On 28 May 1981, members of Likud managed to break up a Labour Party meeting and throw Shimon Peres, the party leader, out of town. Peres fled under a barrage of tomatoes and stones. The immediate reason for the flare up of emotions against the Labour Party was the fact that some Labour Party leaders had made racist statements, such as Motti Gur who said 'We'll screw the Sephardim like we screw the Arabs.'<sup>26</sup> The Sephardim of Beth Shemesh shouted at Peres and his comrades, 'We don't want you here, you fucking Ashkenazim, go back to Tel Aviv!' Then

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they shouted, 'Arafat - Arafat - Arafat!' and others shouted, 'Begin - Begin - Begin!' Since the Labour Party represents the nucleus of Ashkenazi Zionist establishment, many Sephardim believe that Begin and his party offer the only means of breaking this establishment. Residents of the town state that it was the Labour Party which ruled all aspects of life before 1978 and which gave preference to Ashkenazim in everything and considered them 'Israelis' while terming Sephardim 'the Oriental sects' and 'primitives' and had forced them to give up their cultural identity. The leader of the Labour Party had deemed them 'human refuse' whose culture needed to be forgotten Ben Gurion claimed that 'they do not have their own language, but speak jargon.'<sup>27</sup>

Amos Elon who had a dialogue with them, added that some of the Sephardim could join the Zionist establishment by copying their Ashkenazi masters and by conforming to establishment structure.<sup>28</sup> When this Ashkenazi reporter was asked by Patrick Seale about this problem, he denied the existence of anti-Sephardi discrimination and described those who write on this subject as 'fringe' (British TV, 1989; see his report on Kiryat Shemonah).

The motor works, which is the biggest factory in town, faced serious financial problems, causing 600 workers to be laid off. If the factory were to shut, the whole town would shut down too. The secretary of the workers council, Hayyim Harush, said that those laid off had already gone through their redundancy pay and were now just hanging around the streets. All the workers committees had thus got together and formed one committee. The secretary of this new committee, S. Cohen, said that 'The erosion of wages is causing much resentment, and strikes will spread like wildfire.' It is worth mentioning that, at the start, the town's residents believed that the motor factory would teach their children advanced technology and that they would stay in the town. However, it turned out that the overwhelming majority of the engineers were Ashkenazim from out of town.<sup>29</sup>

### BET SHE'AN

By 1985 this town had almost 13,000 inhabitants. Due to economic clashes between the town's residents and their employers from Ashkenazi kibbutzim, most of the residents voted Likud. Their local leader, David Levy, rode this wave of discontent to reach the leadership of the Herut Party and the Likud Bloc. Voting for the right, however, does not benefit the residents, and most of the factories have shut down causing wide unemployment here also.<sup>30</sup> A third of Likud supporters have therefore decided not to vote for it again.

Most of the town's inhabitants work in the textile or food-processing industries, which are notorious for paying low wages. They suffer from abysmal social and health services. Labour Party leaders came here and gave enthusiastic speeches, except that the locals refused to listen. 'Suddenly a woman grabbed the microphone and shouted, "We don't want political parties, we want decent wages."<sup>31</sup> The correspondent for Ha'aretz indicated that the residents were fed up both with the politicians ruling from Jerusalem and the state. Benny, a driver at the Eyn Harod Cooperative Co., told the journalist, 'This country is worse than a ghetto!' Another man told him, 'This ghetto ought to be shut down!' A third said, 'It's time to close down this whole shitty state', to the agreement of all present. The journalist, R. Prester, concludes 'At this calm general meeting there was something ominous and discomfoting. In spite of that, the peoples' comments were more convincing than the pronouncements of the Party leaders at the microphone.'<sup>32</sup>

In another article, by N. Barnir,<sup>33</sup> we see that 800 people, or 20 percent of the working population, is out of work. One of the workers says that he does not

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participate in the demonstrations lest he lose his job, and that he cannot express his opinions because he is deprived of his rights. 'We work like robots, and they despise us and treat us as if we were worthless.' There was an American industrialist in the town called Julius Ber. He invested government funds in his factory, exploited cheap local labour and then disappeared. While he was still around, he treated the Sephardi and Palestinian workers harshly, firing them if there was a disagreement, subjecting them to humiliation and intimidation.

Now the local council is threatening to close the town and to stop providing general services.<sup>34</sup>

Dr Swirski of the University of Haifa carried out a dialogue with some of the residents of Bet She'an, and I shall give here an abridgement of it, leaving out those portions which repeat the views of the resident of Kiryat Shemonah. H: (Vis-a-vis the middle-aged men who had just been laid off) If the Trade Union council were made up of Likud people, it would be able to fight for them with the kibbutzim which belong to the Labour Party and own the industries in the area. If the town were to expand and need more land, it would definitely have to confront the kibbutzim then, since they monopolise all the lands around the town. S: If they develop 'Upper Bet She'an' for the Ashkenazim, then the Sephardi part of town will be 'Lower Bet She'an' (this is a reference to Nazareth where Israel has constructed 'Upper Nazareth' for the Ashkenazim).

H: The kibbutzim don't invest a single pound in industrial projects to employ Sephardim. But they do invest their profits from government hand-outs on the stock exchange and in other projects. Everything for the future is planned along party lines. Why don't they combine our schools with the kibbutz schools? Z: Because the kibbutz kids hate our children. D: Why is it preferable to combine the schools? H: Because educational opportunities are better in their schools. Z: Educating our children in the kibbutz schools would mean taking our children out of their own environment and placing them in an environment which is supposedly more developed. When our children come back home after they finish their studies, they'll face the same problems, but their sense of alienation will be more acute.

H: 99 percent of the Sephardi children who do study on the kibbutzim don't come back to us.

S: Educating Sephardi children in kibbutz schools just creates schizophrenic children, who are not accepted by the Ashkenazim but have assimilated so much of their culture that they cannot go back to Sephardi society.

M: I lived in Kiryat Shemonah. I and some other families managed to send our children to the school at Kibbutz Dafna, but the children remain segregated. One time they had a field trip, but the school refused to provide lunch for our children. This was only made clear to the kids during the trip. The kibbutz provided food for its own children, but ours went hungry during the trip. After that the kids from Kiryat Shemonah did not go on any other field trips. My son won't take part in any of the student clubs or societies, since he has come up against numerous problems which have scarred him emotionally.

R: They have turned these towns into Sephardi ghettos. In Bet She'an for example, 85 percent of the town consists of Moroccans. That's a mistake. The government gives preferential treatment to Ashkenazi teachers to come from out of town, but after a short while they leave again. V: It's a transit camp here.

Z: What happens to a teacher who has been brought up here? S: The poor wretch! MY: They help the teachers who come from outside, but they don't help local

## Development Towns

teachers. It's our fault because we don't fight it. When we do fight, we come up against government repression.

M: Why don't you revolt?

H: Because council members are working for the ruling party, it's in their own interest.

M: Why don't you oppose them?

H: We had a popular uprising in 1957/58. We smashed everything up and cried 'Bread and Work'. But the uprising was forcibly put down. The police arrested some of the demonstrators and threw them into prison. Then they were run out of town. The leaders of the town took bribes.

MY: We'll succeed, if everyone takes part in a revolt, like Wadi al-Salib.

Z: We won't be able to organize that!

H: We have to set up political groups in the development towns, the Black Belt and the large towns . . . the inhabitants of the development towns voted for Begin, to improve their situation. But that hasn't happened, and the new leader ought to be one of us, not Begin or Katz . . .

H: The government has treated us with contempt. It erected a textile factory to employ 700 people and placate the seething resentment. But the young leave the town, leaving behind just the old folk. Over the last seven to nine years the population has gone down from 12-14,000 to 12,700. What has happened to natural increase? Every year between 250 and 300 people get out of the army, and there is no work for them. The settlements managed to grab all the economic programmes, thanks to their members who are in the central government, the agricultural administration or Hamashbir (the Histadrut stores), and so forth. That's how they are effective. We don't have that power. Even though the programmes were aimed at helping places like Bet She'an, they built a factory on Kibbutz Mesillot, and at Bet She'an's expense they got allowances, loans and grants as well as vocational training programmes.

A: Because in the Kibbutz Federation they are united.

N: Take the settlement of Neveh Etan for example. It has built the Plasgon factory. When it was doing well in the first two years, they sent some members to Britain and America for training, at the expense of other settlements.

D: The government has various ways of covering up the losses of the kibbutzim.

H: The kibbutz monopolies are destroying our enterprises. 10-12 years ago, people from our town who worked with heavy machinery set up a cooperative, but it was soon swallowed up by the kibbutzim. Then we set up a truck cooperative, but it was snuffed out by the kibbutz-owned Bet She'an-Harod Company. Why don't we set up our own political and spiritual leadership?

D: People who own the smaller companies, employing up to 25 workers, come from all the communities. But the owners of the large companies which use the latest technology are almost all Ahkenazim. How is it that the Ashkenazim have managed to get ample funding, but we Sephardim have failed? Why do we have more drunkards, prostitutes and alienated youth? And we don't have any ministers, or generals or pilots.

B: And if our children graduate from university, they cannot get a job.

S: We ought to tell the managers who come from out of town that we don't want them. Then we should employ managers from here.

H: Businesses won't accept that.

N: Because we don't encourage our own - the Moroccans.

S: Because they've brainwashed us.

A: The Moroccans don't help each other.

S: Because the state tells you that Moroccans are incapable of running a company?

H: The state and business should adopt the principle of equality of opportunity.

## Discord in Zion

B: We have to define our aims.

N: We ought to set up our own local leadership. Why should we not be able to create a political force through organization?<sup>35</sup>

Finally, we must mention that the development town of Arad does not suffer from any of the afore-mentioned problems, since its inhabitants are Ashkenazim. The government classes it as an 'Ashkenazi settlement' and therefore its economic structure is completely different from that of the Sephardi development towns.<sup>36</sup>

## NOTES

- 1 Ha'aretz, 4 September 1981.
- 2 Zu Haderekh, 15 January 1986 and January 22 1986.
- 3 Zu Haderekh, 15 October 1980.
- 4 Ha'aretz, 28 December 1984.
- 5 Ha'aretz, 28 December 1984.
- 6 Zu Haderekh, 2 April 1986.
- 7 Ha'aretz, 4 April 1986.
- 8 Zu Haderekh, 23 July 1986.
- 9 Zu Haderekh, 26 June 1985.
- 10 Zu Haderekh, 4 June 1987.
- 11 The writings of Shlomo Zadoq appeared in Yedi'ot Aharonot.
- 12 Roman Prester, Ha'aretz, 24 August 1984.
- 13 Zu Haderekh, 9 July 1986.
- 14 Zu Haderekh, 15 January 1986.
- 15 Ma'ariv, 25 December 1980.
- 16 Ha'aretz, 27 July 1981.
- 17 Ha'aretz, 28 December 1984.
- 18 Zu Haderekh, 9 January 1985.
- 19 30 May 1986.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Al-Ghazi, Zu Haderekh, 9 July 1986.
- 22 M. Artzieli, Ha'aretz, 19 September 1986.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ha'aretz, 1 November 1980.
- 25 Zu Haderekh, 1 July 1987.
- 26 Ha'aretz Supplement, 4 September 1981.
- 27 Meaning, the different dialects of colloquial Arabic (see chapter eight).
- 28 Ha'aretz, 28 September 1981.
- 29 Zu Haderekh, 2 April 1986.
- 30 Ha'aretz, 21 June 1985.
- 31 Quoted from an article by Roman Prester in Ha'aretz, 21 June 1985.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Zu Haderekh, 24 July 1985.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Swirski, 1981, 119-138.
- 36 Ha'aretz, 27 June 1980.

## APPENDIX IV MOSHAVIM (COOPERATIVE VILLAGES)

Moshav Porat: By 1980 it had one thousand inhabitants. The fathers, or grandfathers, came from Libya. As the average number of families members was 10, there was an acute housing problem with parents, children and grandchildren living in the same unit. The average total individual annual income was £17 sterling. The moshav has debts of £193,333 sterling. The youth cannot leave the village because they have no vocation and are not able to find accommodation. On 26 September 1980 Ha'aretz reported that the moshav's problems were highly explosive, had caused widespread crime and led to acts of violence to the extent that the Eged bus company was afraid to send its buses to the moshav. Due to a lack of water for irrigation, most of the moshav's orchards have become dry - that is, 1,300 dunums of citrus fruit and 303 dunums of flowers. The primary emotion of the inhabitants is resentment in face of the policy of racial discrimination. At the present time, they have overcome their jealousy of their rich Ashkenazi neighbouring settlements and just want to leave the moshav, but where to? Even though the correspondent of Ha'aretz writes of the despair and misery in the moshav, he is condescending towards them. Asher Kishner claims that 'they are a few centuries behind' because they have preserved some aspects of their Sephardi culture. The title of the article is 'Cave-dwellers dilemma' implying that Sephardim and Arabs still live in caves. A year later a Libyan Jew, Shelmon Kardi, stated to a correspondent of Ha'aretz, Y. Hamizrahi<sup>1</sup> that Libyan Jews had held high positions in the Libyan police, army and government, and that even the Germans and Italians had treated them deferentially.

Moshav Eliakim: This moshav was founded in 1949 for Yemenites. Two years later, when the residents realised that no one had studied the soil and that it was uncultivable, they left the moshav. A few years later Yemenites from Tsemah Camp were taken there. When they found that the land was uncultivable, they went to work as labourers on Ashkenazi settlements. Sara Avraham said that her husband's monthly wage was £120 sterling, and that her children left the moshav because the authorities would not let them stay. She added, 'We would like to be able to farm, but we cannot because of the discrimination against us.' Sa'adya Sirri, a member of the local town council, said that 'the land could be farmed if the farmers were able to get some financial support from the government.' He continued, 'They have money for the settlements in the occupied Arab territories, how come they have none to help us?' Half of the inhabitants of the moshav live on welfare and a third are out of work.<sup>2</sup>

Moshav Avivim: Founded in 1963 to settle Moroccans. By 1982 its debts had reached 15 million shekels. The housing conditions are lamentable. Children are only educated between the ages of 8 and 12. The school has no library or science laboratory and its educational standard is extremely low. Parents cannot afford to pay income tax and the government therefore impounded their telephones, television and furniture. Mounds of foul-smelling garbage surround the houses. The unemployed young people of the moshav hang out in the streets. The village has one nurse and a doctor comes twice a week. As a result of their seething resentment, the inhabitants declared a general strike and were joined by the inhabitants of neighbouring moshavim, such as Shefer, Netoa' and others.<sup>3</sup>

Moshav Zar'it: This village lies on the Lebanese border and is inhabited by 48

## Discord in Zion

families. The greatest cause of resentment is the debt situation and the fact that egg production is limited to just 320 per annum per farmer, whereas the residents wish to produce 550 eggs per annum to pay off their debts which have now reached \$2.2 million. On 26 June 1986 Zu Haderekh reported that the inhabitants had declared a general strike and locked the gates of the village after the failure of their negotiations with the authorities. They also decided to return their arms to the army and to desist from carrying out reserve duty.

Roman Prester, a correspondent of Ha'aretz, accused the Zionist establishment of neglect, particularly with regard to education, in Kiryat Malakhi.<sup>4</sup> He called this moshav 'an angel-less village' making a pun on the name of the village and the Hebrew word for angel (mal'akh).

On 6 March 1970 Ha'aretz reported that a representative of the BBC in Israel had met Sephardim from the northern moshavim who were suffering from poverty and discrimination. He commented that these Sephardim would probably leave their moshavim and development towns in the north, not because of attacks by members of Fateh, (the largest Palestinian military organisation) but because of the cold-heartedness of the bureaucrats in Tel Aviv.

In his article in Ha'aretz on 2 April 1982, David Oren wrote that 'the government does not intend to rescue the moshavim from bankruptcy, but hopes rather to eliminate them and transform them into residential areas.' That means that the lands will be taken from the residents and handed over to private companies which will then employ the residents in various agricultural and industrial projects, thereby removing any differences between the development towns and the moshavim. Five years after this article was published, the parliamentary finance committee recommended eliminating 30-40 moshavim, as David Oren had forecast. The amount owed by the moshavim rose from \$550 million in 1985 to \$2,000 million in 1987 due to an increase in the interest rate of between 100 percent and 150 percent in the second half of 1985 followed by another 40 percent increase in 1986. Thus, the additional interest due on the loans during 1985/1986 was 600 million shekels (\$350 million).<sup>5</sup>

## NOTES

1 2 October 1981

2 Ha'aretz, 27 November 1981

3 Zu Haderekh, 31 March 1982, 24 March 1982

4 6 March 1970

5 A. Shushan, Zu Haderekh, 29 July 1987



## APPENDIX V SLUMS

Musrara: One of the slum neighbourhoods of Jerusalem - between the old and new sections of the city. The Black Panther movement started here. Living conditions are as follows:

38 percent of the residents live in crowded conditions, with more than 3 to a room.

58 percent live more than 2 to a room.

58 percent of the dwellings are damp.

31 percent of families have more than 6 children. The family in building number 5 on Prophets Street, for instance, has 8 children living in one and a half rooms.

Out of a class of 25 pupils, only 3 have been accepted at a secondary vocational school.

None of them were accepted into an academic secondary school.

19 percent of the youth (12-17 years old) neither studies nor works.

25 percent of the youth does not go into the army (i.e. they refuse to do military service).

39 percent of the men (22-30 years old) are unemployed.

65 percent of children are born to an illiterate mother or father. 25 percent of children have two illiterate parents. 50 percent of adults have had no primary schooling.

We must point out that most of these illiterates were either born or raised in 'progressive' Israel, and not in the 'primitive' Arab states.<sup>1</sup>

In 1982 the authorities built three air-raid shelters, but not a single residential unit.<sup>2</sup> A number of families therefore decided to break the law and challenge the military authorities by squatting in an air-raid shelter.

The authorities are trying to get the residents to leave this strategically important district between the old and new cities of Jerusalem, where there have been amicable contacts between Sephardim and Palestinians from the old city. This is considered to be treasonable by the settlers who want to demolish the district and build a chic Ashkenazi suburb in its place. Charlie Biton, the leader of the Black Panthers, was raised and lives here. He has been accused of holding secret meetings with Abu Jihad in Switzerland and of having a secret Swiss bank account. Thus we see that the authorities, the intelligence agencies and the secret police consider the Moroccans and Iraqis of this district a 'security risk' which must be removed from the heart of the city.

Shelly Ben 'Ami claims that her husband is in prison and that she is homeless. Moreover her son suffers from tracheitis. Many parents, children and grandchildren live together in one-room flats. Orli Idri points out that she lives with her husband and five children in a dilapidated house which they have forcibly occupied. The house is exposed to cold winds, rain and damp since its windows do not close properly. Her children have all caught tracheitis. 24 families were compelled to buy very cheap flats in Ma'aleh Adumim on the occupied West Bank, but they are fighting to return to Musrara because they support Palestinian rights and oppose the occupation and settlement of the West Bank.

In 1967 there were 6,000 residents in Musrara. By 1983 the authorities had managed to remove 3,000 of them. The remainder remain under pressure to evacuate the district completely. The mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, said that overcrowding in Jerusalem is four times worse than that in Tel Aviv and that the construction of plush Ashkenazi suburbs could lead to disturbances in Sephardi areas, similar to the Moroccan agitation in Wadi al-Salib in Haifa in 1959.<sup>3</sup>

## Discord in Zion

Shekhunat Ha'argazim (Slum of Boxes) in Tel Aviv: This is one of the slum districts in south Tel Aviv. (The largest slum district is the Hatikvah district, which has 5,000 flats of which 3,000 are 1.5 room flats.<sup>4</sup> In April 1987 there were newspaper reports that crime in these districts had become chronic and was caused by some Palestinians who lived there and worked in Tel Aviv - even though the municipality rejected these claims. Shekhunat Ha'argazim is inhabited by Sephardim who fled the transit camps, the development towns and the moshavim, and as such the municipality refuses to provide services to them. Thus they have no water and electricity and no street or sewer repairs are carried out. The unsanitary conditions are a public danger and crime is rife amongst the disaffected youth.

Ha'aretz reported on 24 October 1980 that the residents were building houses out of empty barrels, wood and tar. The whole area is overrun by armies of rats and the inhabitants are exposed to damp, rain and biting cold. The district is populated by 200 families. When the rain is heavy, the drains overflow. During the summer the drains give off an intolerable odour as well as hosting armies of pestilential insects. The people of this district originally came from the Arab world in 1950. A considerable proportion are now aged and infirm with no one to care for them.

In 1975 the municipality decided to transfer them to other residential areas, and in the framework of this decision 28 families were resettled when the programme came to a halt due to a 'lack of funds'. The municipality then decided to give an emolument to anyone who left the district though the amount offered was not enough to buy another flat.

Not too far away the municipality, in spite of its lack of funds, built the beautiful suburb of Neveh Sharet for Jews from the Soviet Union. This blatant discrimination led to much resentment and anti-Russian violence. Sephardi children took to throwing stones at these beautiful new flats. A large number of the new-arrivals then emigrated to the United States, saying that they did not want to live in a cemetery with those 'black Arabs', meaning the Sephardi Jews.<sup>5</sup>

District 'D' in Tiberias: A report by Gideon Elon in Ha'aretz on 3 April 1981 stated that this slum had 12,000 inhabitants, that is, half of the population of Tiberias. The district is noted for its ugly housing, the piles of rubbish everywhere and its remoteness from the rest of the town. Thus many of its residents have fled, leaving behind 233 empty flats. The remaining flats are overcrowded, with an average room occupancy of 2-3 people. The flats are very small, having an area of between 34 and 54m<sup>2</sup>. The biggest flat has a floor area of 64m<sup>2</sup>. They are beset by damp and foul odours. There are between 300-500 families living solely off welfare payments, and 200 families with more than 10 children. There are also hundreds of illiterate women since pupils leave school before the end of their compulsory education. There are scores of children who neither study nor work, and the government sends between 40-50 children every year to special centres for children without parents in Israel.

The head of the Slum Clearance Project, Hayyim Hecht, says that most of the workers in the district work in kibbutz factories in the Jordan Valley. The kibbutz members treat these workers like peasants, using them for the most menial jobs and paying them poor wages. The opportunities for vocational advancement are extremely limited. Over the last few years, the rupture between the 'socialist' bosses and the workers has become acute. He continued that many have taken to drugs and gambling. Crime and mugging are so rampant in the district that it is dangerous for girls to go out alone at night. Gady Ben Porat, Director of the Community Centre, points out the slum revival programme which started after 1979 is purely cosmetic in that it does not deal with the root problems.

## Slums

In Petah Tikvah, Z. Shasha and his family were reduced to living in the streets, in front of the court building. Both of his children fell ill, and Shasha himself had kidney and respiratory problems. He had been forced to do hard and unaccustomed work as a house-painter. He had also tried to become a Muslim and a Christian and to return to Iraq in protest against Zionist injustice. After the government had put him off for 40 days, he committed suicide by setting himself alight in June 1987. Only then, after an outcry in the media, did the government grant his widow and orphans a rented apartment. Z. Shasha came from a well-known and respectable family in Baghdad - the Bet Shasha family.<sup>6</sup> The middle class background of Mr Shasha and others is to be stressed since Israeli agents are telling the well-off Sephardi community in Britain that all the unfortunate Sephardi Jews in Israel originated from the Baghdad slum Abu Sifen, from the 'caves of Libya', or the 'Atlas Mountains of Morocco.'

### NOTES

- 1 Ha'aretz, 15 June 1979 to correspondent Akiva Eldar.
- 2 Zu Haderekh, 9 February 1983.
- 3 Ha'aretz, 6 March 1970.
- 4 Ha'aretz, 15 June 1979.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Weekly supplement to Ha'aretz, 26 June 1987.

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