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JPRS L/9998

21 September 1981

Near East/North Africa Report

(FOUO 32/81)

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NEAR EAST/NORTH AFRICA REPORT

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CONTENTS

ISRAEL

Sephardic Views on Peace, International Relations Discussed
(NEW OUTLOOK, Jul-Aug 81) 1

Peace Attitudes Viewed, by Shalom Cohen
President on Sephardic Community, by Yitzhak Navon
Sephardi Leader Interviewed, Elie Eliachar Interview
Sephardi Federation Leader on Peace, by Nessim D. Gaon
Sephardim: Peace With Egypt, by Mordecai Jules Soussan
Attitudes Toward Begin, David Sitton Interview
Ashkenazi Cultural Hegemony, by Sammy Smouha

MOROCCO

Libya's Support of POLISARIO Continued
(Ian Black; THE GUARDIAN, 9 Sep 81) 24

- a -

[III - NE & A - 121 FOUO]

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ISRAEL

SEPHARDIC VIEWS ON PEACE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DISCUSSED

Peace Attitudes Viewed

Tel Aviv NEW OUTLOOK in English Jul-Aug 81 pp 35, 66

[Article by Shalom Cohen: "Destruction of the Myth"]

[Text]

The Sephardis - and Peace. Two subjects which have never been dealt with together except to imply that the Sephardis are hostile to peace. But, it is said, Israel wants peace. The Sephardi Jews - the term used to define all Jews originating from Arab and Moslem countries, even though the literal meaning of the term would limit it to Jews of "Spanish" origin - actually constitute the majority of the Jewish population of Israel. Even if we maintain that all Ashkenazi Jews favor peace, even then those who want peace would be only a minority. But God knows there are plenty of Ashkenazis in the Israeli equivalent of the Rejection camp. So either of the following statements has got to be false: that the Sephardis are not hostile to peace - or that Israel does not want peace.

No one in Israel has ever yet been sufficiently disturbed by these widely held assumptions to point out this flagrant contradiction. This is most probably because, as in everything dealing with Sephardi Jews, those in power prefer to hold on to the set stereotypes which they themselves created, displaying a remarkable consistency in this matter. Without seeking to list all the attributes pertaining to these stereo-

types, examples of this include: the Sephardis are lazy and addicted to *arak*, they beat their wives - after making them produce a dozen kids of course - they have an implacable hatred for the Arabs and, it goes without saying, are opposed to peace.

Little can be done to shake fixed stereotypes which are adhered to blindly, "confirmed" and "proved" repeatedly throughout almost two generations by "researchers". It was necessary for certain truths to be declared from the rooftops, loudly if not violently, in order to cast doubt on these myths, and that is why New Outlook, convinced that Jews and Arabs can and should live in peace in the same land, have decided to tackle this thorny problem.

It is not our intention to claim that the entire Sephardi community is devoted to the cause of peace, but rather to state our firm conviction that, without their massive participation, peace can never be achieved. That is why it is so vital to re-establish the balance of information and to help acquaint the public with those who have undertaken to dedicate themselves to peace - a role well fitted to the Sephardis, not only because they represent the

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majority of Israelis but also because of their history and the mission it confers on them in the light of a past of peaceful co-existence based on mutual understanding. If the Sephardi Jews had not existed, the State of Israel would have had to invent them, so as to facilitate its integration into the family of Middle East nations.

In this month's issue of New Outlook we have published several articles, and excerpts from articles, which appeared in Les Sepharades et la Paix, a recent New Outlook publication in French.

We have not attempted to present a collection of erudite studies on Oriental Jewry, but preferred instead, to give them the opportunity to speak for themselves. Thus, we have not confined ourselves to official personalities whose words one is accustomed to reading or hearing, but have also asked militants who

uphold the most outstanding aspects of Israeli Sephardism, and who today, as in the past, play a major role in the process of politization of Oriental Jews.

We hope we have made some contribution towards countering the prejudices so widely held against the Sephardis by pointing out the problems faced by the Sephardi communities in Israel and the Diaspora, by showing that oriental Jews are well represented in the camp of peace and dialogue with the Arab world. From now on, no one can any longer claim ignorance of their contribution.

Even if our effort has not allowed one to conclude that the Sephardis are the most fervent supporters of peace, we hope at least to have helped prove that they do not nurture the fierce hatred of the Arabs that is so often attributed to them by researchers.

While the terms Sephardis and "peace" may not be synonymous, neither are they mutually exclusive.

President on Sephardic Community

Tel Aviv NEW OUTLOOK in English Jul-Aug 81 pp 36-39

[Article by President Yitzhak Navon: "Roots and a Future"]

[Text]

Of all Israel's achievements, the most original and worthwhile is the Kibbutz. Even the greatest utopians never in their wildest dreams envisioned the solidification of this type of society, founded upon equality and justice. Though those few thousand Israelis in question constitute about 3% of the population, their impact far outweighs their numbers. In the Knesset they hold no less than 16% of the seats, and not one political party fails to include kibbutz members on their voting lists.

In addition, Israel is one of the few places on earth where the cultural and economic level of the rural sector is not below that of the large city; indeed, at times, even surpassing it. But the high standard of living achieved in most

kibbutzim risks a questioning of the pioneering ideals, whilst the growing gap between the kibbutzim and their environment causes the former to retreat more and more into itself. The fact that the kibbutzim must resort to salaried workers has touched upon their morals. But when a worker from Migdal Ha'emek employed in the faucet factory of the neighboring Kibbutz Alonim is not allowed to use the Olympic-sized pool there, the abandonment of fundamental pioneering ideals is reflected in a most particular fashion.

Among other equally remarkable and original achievements is the powerful Histadrut, whose objective is to defend the workers' interests, not only in terms of salary, but on the levels of culture and health too. It was not the

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workers who dragged the Histadrut into their struggles; on the contrary, the Histadrut guided them over long years by posing national and pioneering challenges. That much said, what worker today would speak of the central office of the Histadrut as "our home" without being ridiculed? The rupture is not due to strife or a lack of discipline; it is simply the direct consequence of the abandonment by this huge organization of its original uniqueness. Similarly the I.D.F ("Tzahal") having formed an illustrious part of our history, remains an integrating factor of the Israeli people. Basically composed of reserve troops, Tzahal is an anti-militaristic army that proclaims peace. Having said this, one can only deplore the excessive politicking amongst its generals, while young Israelis are ready to volunteer themselves for any mission.

The population of three million inhabitants lends itself to varied and supportive cultural activity. Thus, more than 3,200 books were printed last year. In addition to the 77 monthly papers and 577 various periodicals, 27 daily newspapers appear in several languages. And culturally, the Jews are particularly pampered. On opening the newspaper to the entertainments page, I was offered a choice of 23 plays of which five were for children, six dance and musical performances and 16 shows – all on the same evening. Tonight they are performing Shakespeare, Pinter, Müller, Ibsen and Chekov, as well as ten original plays in Hebrew, of which one deals with the problems of an Arab student arriving in Tel Aviv. Add to that scores of organized exhibitions in the cities and towns and you have a density of activity proportionately greater than the population.

A heavy shadow casts itself, however, upon this idyllic scenario. A large majority of Israelis remain outside of the circle of these activities. Israel still has close to 250,000 illiterates over the age of 14, two-thirds of whom originate from Africa and Asia, whilst one-third are Poles and Rumanians whose education was most probably interrupted by World War II. Even today, Jews originating from the Arab countries constitute only 11% of university students. The number of youths who are

neither studying nor working reaches the thousands. Violence and corruption are increasing – a consequence of the emulation of what goes on elsewhere.

The mass-media have altered our sense of time and space and we are borrowing more and more customs and concepts foreign to Judaism and the quality of life to which we aspire. These problems would probably be troubling in a homogenous society of people with shared precepts; in a society as heterogeneous and complex as ours they are even more disturbing. The Israeli population is made up of immigrants from 102 countries, speaking 82 languages. These immigrants come not only from far-away and diversified countries, but also from by-gone eras: some stroll out of the 19th century, whereas others come with ideas and experiences leaping into the 21st. The linguistic diversity does not pose solely a technical problem, since language problems are by no means limited to communication. Our basic question is to figure out how to create a nation out of all these ethnic groups and how to define a cultural and spiritual image for our new society.

A Common Past

Foreign sociologists, principally Americans, tend to establish a parallel between Israel and the United States. Just as Israelis of African or Asian background would be linked to Chinese, Puerto Rican or Black Americans, Ashkenazi Israelis would be compared with WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants) in this scenario. To them, the problems and solutions for these groups seem identical. Thank goodness, the situation in Israel is much more reassuring than their conclusions would have us think. The common denominator amongst American immigrants was generally a quest for material well-being, and at times, for political freedom or freedom of expression. But no spiritual link united an Italian immigrant to one from Poland or Mexico. If it had been possible for each to have settled in Canada or Argentina, they would have just as well done so. This is not Israel's case. All of those who came here share thousands of years of history and common aspirations – it is historical and spiritual attachment that was foremost in their

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choice. Whether from Morocco, Rumania, Afghanistan or the United States, we all carry in our memories the flight from Egypt, the giving of the Commandments (Torah) on Mount Sinai, our nation's past in the Holy Land, the words of our prophets, the destruction of the Temple and the exile, and finally, our regained independence.

The Problems of a Moral Order

What we all aspire to, expressed differently, but laden with the same deep and fundamental meaning, is the creation of an independent Jewish life. The two thousand years of our dispersion to the four corners of the world have, in effect, separated our past and our aspirations. How is it possible to fill up such a gap in time? The most frequent response could not be more concise: housing and education. Solutions that are difficult to realize because of their cost, but that deserve weighty consideration. We are told to build so many thousands of apartments, to allocate such and such a budget to education and then only have to sit back and wait to reap the fruits of our labor.

I do not by any means underestimate the necessity of such measures. At the same time, I am aware that they will not solve everything: they do not go after the root of the problem — the moral order. There exist two diametrically opposed examples. In Ramat Gan, where many Iraqi immigrants have settled, all the outward necessary signs of an integrated community are brought together. Many of the residents have continued into higher education: lawyers, shopkeepers and doctors who have concluded their military service brilliantly live well in comfortable apartments. However, the election list they put forth in the last regional elections was "Iraqi". For what reason?

Many Israelis of African and Asian background have the talent, education and satisfactory material means to go into law, trade and banking, while not attaining political leadership on a national level. And yet, it is highly possible to draw up a list of ministers and representatives of non-African or Asian origin who have succeeded without higher education — some even without a secondary education —

who are not rich. For an answer, one must look elsewhere than at material concerns, in an area that has nothing to do with how many square meters make up the home or how many years were spent in education. It is the individual's perception of his own identity and the image that his peers relay. Jewish immigrants from all over found themselves confronted with a society different from their own, one centered not only around new customs and ideas, but one that overlapped into all echelons. It was clear to them that once stepping foot into the Promised Land, they had to adhere to these new ways. They thus began to destroy all that made them unique, even their values concerning family traditions and reaching as far as their pronunciation of Hebrew, their style of dress, their attachment to the synagogue, their family names, their music. This is what they had to sacrifice on the altar of integration in their sincere wish to be part of the standard melting pot in Israel.

Some have paid dearly to reach their goals. Others trying it out got scarred in the process before retreating to their corners, whereas most of them, essentially the young people, remained suspended between two poles, without finally swinging one way or the other. Their story reminds us of a Talmudic tale about the crow. "Why," asks the Talmud, "does the crow seem to waddle?" Struck one day by the dove's graceful and dance-like step, the crow envied her and told himself deep down, "I, too, will dance like her!" But while trying to copy her, he broke a wing, making him a laughing stock of the whole winged brood. Disgraced, the crow decided to go back to his original gait. But he was unsuccessful in recovering either his original style or his imitation of the graceful dove. This is why the crow waddles so awkwardly.

Encouraging the young Moroccan

From now on, we must ask what makes the young Israeli of Moroccan origin, when asked about his background, respond, "I'm from southern France," or with definite animosity, "from Morocco, so what!" What process would succeed in bringing him around to answer straight out, "I'm from Morocco."

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I personally do not think that awarding him a scholarship or supplying him with housing, two measures that I would nonetheless promote, would help at all. Only something capable of modifying his own self-image would bring him peace of mind. We can now hope for such results thanks to several actions directed towards a new self-evaluation of the richness of his cultural heritage: the study of the North African Jewish community's history and its spiritual and philosophical contributions throughout the generations. These include the contributions of the outstanding community by great thinkers whom the whole people can call their own. The sons of this community who were truly courageous soldiers, and whose settling of farming villages and development towns greatly changed the face of Israel. Our duty is to encourage this young Moroccan to gain pride in his heritage and the contributions of his ascendants in the building of the State of Israel.

Such a process will put him at ease even more so that he will of necessity, fall back upon the security of his surrounding environment. Only at this stage of his self-acceptance and assimilation should we talk about the Polish and Russian pioneers that drained the swamps, lived in tents to overcome malaria, and established the foundations for the great undertaking that became the State of Israel. Then we can hope for substantial progress on the level of education and participation in political leadership.

What I have just expressed about the Moroccan community goes for most of the other "Eastern" communities. In the absence of such a course of action, one can expect either a move towards introspection or aggression and violence. This policy being even more urgent today than ever before, Israel must take up the challenge of peace and call on the Eastern communities, through their history and their culture, to be proud of their particular contributions. There are those that shout about the dangers of "Levantization" that the peace treaty with Egypt would facilitate. It seems that they know nothing about it. Since, what does "Levantization" actually mean beside a superficial and tacky imitation of a foreign culture?

One can already deplore the start of American, British, or French influence on Israeli culture.

And yet, we need not worry about Israeli and Arab cultures clashing: even under rough conditions during the long generations that we have lived in Arab lands, have not the Jews retained their identity and their heritage, their uniqueness and their faithfulness to Zion? At the right moment, they came to Israel by the hundreds of thousands. I am opposed to those who would dangle before our eyes the pendulum of "Levantization" after the signing of the peace treaty with Egypt. Even if we should one day sign peace treaties with all the Arab nations, I am convinced that we are without a doubt capable of developing a society of great moral character, one endowed with an original cultural identity of strong foundations.

Our willingness to promote these values in this regard will be especially decisive. Knowing the Arab language and culture, the ways and customs of our neighbors and an intensive study of them should not necessarily induce the Israeli to denounce his own identity and values. Not more than knowing the English language and culture makes a person British. The Arabs' love of their language and cultural heritage is such that I often wind up envying them. I would only wish that there were as many of my Israeli brothers that would love their own language and retain their own heritage as much. We would gain much, in effect, from the example of the Arabs, most notably in their hospitality, their politeness, their attachment to family values and the respect of the youth for elders. Neither our uniqueness nor our heritage would be put to test. Quite the contrary. I experience great pleasure from listening to the songs of the wonderful Egyptian singer, Oum Kalsoum, just as I enjoy, on another level, the works of Bach or of Beethoven. I am also asked at times if "that unending monotony doesn't tire you out?" To which I respond, "How long does one of Wagner's operas last?" It is perfectly natural for Oriental Jews to like Arab music. Did it ever prevent them from developing a rich and diversified Jewish culture or test their love of Zion? When the shofar of the rebirth of Israel called out, they hastened by the hundreds of thousands to fight our battles, create towns and cities and make the desert bloom. It is about time that all Israeli citizens learn what the facts are instead of burdening their Sephardic brothers with their worries from afar.

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Sephardi Leader Interviewed

Tel Aviv NEW OUTLOOK in English Jul-Aug 81 pp 40-45

[Interview with Elie Eliachar by Hillel Schenker: "Living With the Jews"]

[Text]

Question: As I understand it, the two dominant themes in your life have been the struggle for better treatment for Sephardi and Oriental Jews and better understanding with the Arabs. This is what you wrote in the introduction to the end of the book with Philip Gillon.

Answer: Yes.

Question: You wrote Living with the Palestinians to deal with one of the questions. And now you've written Living with the Jews to deal with the other. What have you tried to do in the second book?

Answer: In order to answer this question I have to go into a bit of history - part of it prior to 1914 - and tell you about the Palestine of the time. Until let us say 1830-1840 there was only one Jewish community in Jerusalem, the majority of which was Sephardi and Oriental. Any Ashkenazi was welcome and every Ashkenazi shared and became part and parcel of that community, known as "Knesset Israel: Sephardi Community". Then a great Ashkenazi Rabbi, Reb Menachem of Shklow, came to Jerusalem, after the Plague and the destruction of Safed by the peasants' rebellion, and decided to establish an Ashkenazi community, a Collel. Although he was alone at the time, he paid nine Sephardi Jews to run a minyan to pray in the "Mossah Ashkenaz" and establish a separate community. Instead of fighting for unity, we had a case of a great Rabbi fighting for separation and achieving it. The material advantage, money, was his object. Before this, all money for Palestine had come through the organized community, which divided it in accordance with need, and also allocated it to the Four Holy Cities - "Arba Aratzot": Hebron, Safed, Tiberias and, of course, Jerusalem. This preserved the unity of the Jews in Palestine. Reb Menachem of Shklow appealed to all the Ashkenazi communities abroad (with whom he had various contacts, whether through family ties or correspondence and visits) and his

demand was very simple; it was not that there was a need to separate because of religious misunderstandings or other community differences, he simply said, "Why should all the Ashkenazis' money go to the Sephardi government? Let all contributions be sent to us so we can form an Ashkenazi Collel or entity." Money, therefore, brought about the separation of the community.

Other communities, such as the North Africans, followed, working to obtain individually the contributions from their own countries of origin. The previous unity was disintegrated. Thus the Ashkenazim were separated into different entities, as were the Sephardim and Orientals, weakening the unity of the Jewish people in the Holy Land. Misunderstanding between oldtimers and newcomers, as is the case wherever there is large-scale immigration, began here also. But as early as 1664 the Sephardi community had sent a special delegation to Istanbul requesting permission for the Ashkenazim to come and settle in Jerusalem and to build their own synagogue. This case was reported by a Catholic pilgrim, Eugene Roger, in his book A Visit to the Holy Land. Misunderstandings also arose because of the problem of language and the historical separation of the various Jewish communities for centuries. Let me point out that Zionism has existed since the captives from Jerusalem chanted the psalms: "If I forget thee O Jerusalem" and "How can I sing the songs of Zion in captivity?" on the shores of the Euphrates in Babylon. That's Zionism, and that is the true historical sequence of it. The precursor of political Zionism was absolutely forgotten. It was Rabbi Yehudah Alkalay, who, sixty years before Herzl, wrote his wonderful booklet Shema Israel! (Hear O Israel!). In this booklet he laid down all the details for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Most of his suggestions are law in the Herzelian Zionism Movement. He included matters of which Herzl never dreamt, such as the fact that there

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were Arabs in Palestine, and how to behave in consequence.

Under Ottoman rule, no one could be a member of any group that had national aspirations, whether Arab, Armenian (you know what happened to the Armenians), Jewish, Greek or Rumanian. Therefore the first political Zionists like Yehuda Alkalay had to camouflage what they did, pretending it was in the interests of the Ottoman Empire. At the first Zionist Congress there were only two or three Sephardi representatives, since they couldn't come from the Turkish Empire. They were afraid to participate. When Herzl visited Jerusalem my great-grandfather, who was the Chief Rabbi, the Rishon Lezion, received a written instruction stating that nobody was to meet Herzl, that if he were received with any special honors as a leader then the Jewish community throughout the Turkish Empire would suffer bitterly. So he sent his assistant, young Rabbi Jacob Meir, to explain matters to Herzl.

The Zionist Organization was established on a special model: that it would provide and attend to the needs of the declared Zionists duly represented at the Zionist Congress; in other words, if you were an Ashkenazi or a Yemenite or a Sephardi who had no representative in the Zionist Congress to start with, you were forgotten, a left-over, not taken care of at all. In 1918 the problem became apparent. I was a born Zionist, not only because I was born in the old city of Jerusalem on Mount Zion, but because there was a long tradition of Zionism in my family. When I returned from the Turkish Army and the British occupied Palestine, I joined the most radical movements, the embryos of the socialist movement, etc. To my surprise I realized that it was not only a question of ideological separation, which did not disturb the Ashkenazim. In my book I describe how this developed. In 1917, while I was still in the Turkish Army, younger elements such as Yehudah Burla, the great Sephardi author, Menashe Man, David Avisar and teachers and scholars formed a youth organization called Histadrut Hatzeirim Hasepharadim, in order to share and participate in the Zionist movement. Yet they could achieve little.

Question: Were they accepted into the movement?

Answer: No, they weren't. They were only accepted while everything was still in its infancy. You see, the British, with their famous policy not to act through revolution but by evolution, didn't change conditions for two or three years after 1917. Until 1920-1 they maintained everything as it was, under military authority.

But soon the British Government stood by the Balfour Declaration, recognizing the Zionist Organization as the principal Jewish representation. This meant the abolition of the Sephardi elite, tied as it was to Turkey, in favor of the Ashkenazi majority representing the Zionist Congress and its organization tied to the Balfour Declaration.

Question: I believe that when you were in the First Knesset you were the first person to use the term "the Second Israel". What exactly did you mean when you said that?

Answer: I meant that there was a separation. Not the one that exists all over the democratic world between the "haves" and the "have-nots", as for instance in the States, or the underprivileged classes in England. It's not a matter of class, it's a matter of an entire community. Yet I have never acted as a Sephardi or as an Ashkenazi; my battles were and are for the unity of the Jewish people. Once Ben-Gurion stood up at the Knesset to answer an accusation of mine about the ma'abarot (transient-camps) and said, "I represent more Sephardim than Elie Eliachar, who has only four members of the Knesset" (that's what I had at the First Knesset) "whilst I have the majority here as you can see. More Sephardim voted for me and my party".

In answer I said, "Mr. Prime Minister, how right you are! I represented not one Sephardi. Not even my wife, who is an Ashkenazi. I represent nobody. Please answer me. Is there a problem known as a communal problem that adversely affects the Oriental communities?" He answered, "Yes". So then I said, "That's all. I represent a problem. If the problem were Polish (the place you come from) I would go to Warsaw, obtain the franchise of a Polish citizen and a Polish passport and come and defend the Polish case as a Jew, a Zionist and an Israeli. But since you are not defending the Sephardim you say you represent, and you do not attend to their ills, someone must raise this grave problem.

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This I do, again, not as a Sephardi, not as an Ashkenazi, but as a Jew".

Question: This is something I'm trying to understand. Do you believe that there should be separate Sephardi action to deal with the problem?

Answer: No. I believe that you cannot contain a majority of the Jewish people in Israel today without a proper representation of their own. That's the position today and that developed all along and against all common sense because of the proportional system of election. This system completely abolishes any contact or link between the electorate and the representatives. Under this system there is nobody to whom you can appeal to defend your case in the Legislative or the Executive. You vote for a list of a hundred and twenty names, most of whom you don't know. You cannot tell a member of the Knesset, "I voted for you in my constituency". This is the root of the development of the present-day situation in Israel. The caucus of the political parties presents to you a list of a hundred and twenty names, of which you might know ten or twelve, and you vote. The result of this is that whilst we (the Sephardim) make up approximately 70% of the total Jewish population of Israel today, we have not more than twenty-two or twenty-four members in the Knesset. Twenty-four is 20%, which is the best indication. So when I am asked, "Why don't you organize?" I say, "For goodness sake, how can we organize when all Knesset members get about a million pounds each from the taxpayers' funds for their re-election, moreover, a Sephardi or Ashkenazi wishing to be elected has to provide millions of pounds for his campaigning and deposit IS 1,500 or 2,000 as a fixed amount that is confiscated if he is not elected. In addition to that, Mr. Yadin and Mr. Begin receive about IS 4-6000 monthly for every member of their parties in the Knesset. Now how can you fight this situation? Moreover, all political parties have an income from other sections of the government budget and from the Jewish Agency for their campaigning. No Sephardi can ever be elected except as a member of the big parties - the Likud, the Alignment, etc., vowing allegiance to the Party, not to his community. I therefore declare that the non-Ashkenazi elements are not truly represented.

Question: I was wondering how you felt about the Black Panthers?

Answer: I reiterate, there is no independent Sephardi representation today in any central authority like the Knesset, the Cabinet of ministers or local authority. Why? Because anyone sitting in the Knesset like Abu-Hatzeira or David Levy or Mr. Moshe Nessim could be discharged if he ever voiced his own opinions against the party, the whip of which would descend on them and force them to toe the line. The only such case in the history of Israeli politics was when Prof. Avner Shaki, the deputy Minister for Education, went against his party, the N.R.P. Within a week he was ousted. They could dare do it. Mr. Levy doesn't represent anybody; Mr. Abu-Hatzeira represents Abu-Hatzeira. Mr. Levy by order of his party can allocate millions of dollars for settlements in Judea and Samaria and elsewhere, but he will not help the Ohalim people of his own origin and social background. The three Sephardi Ministers couldn't help. So Prime Minister Begin appealed to the President of the World Sephardi Federation, Dr. Nessim Gaon, to come to the rescue. Can anyone pretend, then, that the second Israel is adequately represented and protected?

Question: Does this mean that a separate Sephardi party should be formed?

Answer: No, I don't believe that the Sephardis have the means to fight this way. It would take centuries if you depended on this method. The Oriental communities suffer from the fact that in their countries of origin they were never allowed to practise civil rights. They were never given the right to elect, and when they did vote for a municipality or for Parliament they were dictated to. It's true that in Egypt and other Arab countries we had Ministers of Finance but, as is the case here, they were nominated. Until the eve of our independence we had a Minister of Finance in Baghdad. We had M.Ps in Cairo, but they were all nominated by the party in power. We still need to improve our knowledge and appreciation of civic rights and civic responsibilities.

Question: Do you feel this is basically a question of education and time?

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Answer: No, it's a question of acculturation, unfortunately. What happened is this: those belonging to the second generation are not improving their situation. We made the people forget their past by removing them from their traditional life. Here we put them through bad schooling: improper schools without proper equipment, or educated qualified teachers. Sometimes we sent girls who hadn't finished secondary school and who didn't know Hebrew, to teach the newcomers. These were settled at the boundaries of the Negev or the boundaries of Galilee and as a result of the shtetl acculturation imposed upon them, they knew a little bit about Bialik and Tchernihovsky and whatnot, but they didn't know anything whatsoever about their past culture. When they came home they couldn't speak with their parents; they had nothing in common. This acculturation was the greatest cultural crime of Israel. The younger generation of the mass immigration was acculturated first by being told that they didn't have any culture of their own and then that the only culture was Ashkenazi. Which is wrong. The Ashkenazi culture without the basic Jewish culture of the Sephardis doesn't exist, because the whole Jewish culture was not created in Warsaw or in New York. It was created in Babylon and Jerusalem and Safed and Tiberias and Spain. . . Once, jokingly, I asked President Shazar, "What are you so proud of? Abraham was an Iraqi, Moses was an Egyptian. The Talmud was written by the Babylonian Jews." By the way, I published two articles in "New Outlook" two or three years ago on these questions. One was called, "Born to Fail" and the other "The Non-presence of the Sephardim".

Question: So how do you feel about the method of activity of the Black Panthers and of the Ohalim movement in terms of trying to cope with their problem?

Answer: It is only the beginning of becoming conscious of their own existence and of their civic rights. If no attention is paid to it by the powers-that-be, of the political parties-left, right and center - the danger is that the moment will come when there may be a civil

war between Oriental and non-Oriental masses. The only way to remedy this is nothing less than an alteration of the system of elections. I wouldn't care at all if the one hundred and twenty members of the Knesset were Ashkenazis, if they were elected under the system of a constituency, because then a member of the Knesset would not stand a dog's chance of being re-elected if he didn't defend the needs of his constituents. This is, in my opinion, axiomatically the first step toward a re-united people. You ask me why I didn't raise the question in the First Knesset. Well, here is the answer. In my book Living With Jews I published an exchange of correspondence between myself and Ben-Gurion. The parties are not interested and are only paying lip-service to the problem. Take Mr. Yigael Yadin, for example. What a fake! He went into the Knesset promising to fight for social welfare and for the change of election system into a personal, majoritarian and district-oriented system - the proper democratic system. Well, what has he done? Not even a proper appearance of the subject in the Knesset!

Question: Last year Edgar Bronfman, the President of the World Jewish Congress, wrote a number of very controversial articles. He was very critical of some of the positions of the Israeli government concerning the Territories and the Palestinians. He also made the comment that he was afraid that if Israeli society became more Oriental it would lose its ties with the rest of world Jewry, which is basically Western. What answer would you give to this type of comment?

Answer: I have not read Mr. Bronfman's articles. I rely on your statement. As for his fears that Israel is becoming Oriental, I would advise him to adopt the theme of Arthur Koestler's book The Thirteenth Tribe, and say that the Ashkenazis have nothing to do with the Jews of Palestine, that they are descendants of the Khazars and so on. I discuss the subject in my book. Bronfman is not alone. He is giving vent to what certain Israelis have claimed in excusing the existence of the underprivileged Oriental communities. As they put it, it is clear that there is a problem. These are Jews, they

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said, coming from the Atlas mountains; they lack education, etc. I describe in my book how a certain person told one of the greatest leaders of the democratic world that 65% of the Jewish population in Israel have never eaten with a fork, never sat on a chair and never saw or used a toilet flush. This same person was appointed by the Knesset to solve the problem of the gaps between the communities. So what can you expect? Till Aryeh Pincus (former Jewish Agency Chairman) appeared this is how they wanted to excuse the situation. They forget that Moroccan boy who conquered the highest Syrian position in the Yom Kippur War and, when asked how he did it, said that he had been told it was the eyes of the State. The Ashkenazis aren't coming to Israel while these boys are sacrificing their lives. My blood boils to hear such crazy comments. In the Yom Kippur War 60% of the fallen were Oriental. So how can he dare say that we aren't good Jews or that we are not equal to the Ashkenazis of the "shtetl" from which he originates. My Council once published a booklet in English called Danger—Jewish Racism. If Mr. Bronfman said what you tell me, he and others like him would seem to be the apostles of such racialism.

Question: How do you feel, on the other hand, about Nessim Gaon, also a wealthy Jew not living here and coming to offer advice?

Answer: Is Mr. Gaon the only rich Jew who has not come to Israel? I ask you, why should he always be referred to as the millionaire? He didn't come of his own volition; he was invited. Apparently Mr. Begin, realizing that this is a time-bomb and wanting to avoid trouble with the police, decided to fight the whole thing lying low, so to speak. Dr. Gaon is generous and willing; he was misled, in my opinion, and remember, he is President of the World Sephardi Federation and comes to Israel as does his counterpart, the wealthy Fisher (never referred to as a rich Ashkenazi!)

Question: Do you believe that the fact that Yitzhak Navon, a Sephardi who has been elected President, has had a positive impact on the situation?

Answer: No. It has not had a fundamental

impact. I would rather see him as Minister of Education. There he could have much more influence. The fact that he is President does prove one thing. It shows only that Sephardim can fill any position very well, as Navon does. For example, Mr. Recanati from the Discount Bank, which is a worldwide empire, would, if he agreed, make an excellent Minister of Finance, much better than the one we have now, or any we have had before.

Question: You have said that the Oriental Jews can be a bridge, at least with the Arabs. Could you elaborate on that?

Answer: I don't think this is true of the younger generation, who are being assimilated by the Ashkanzi political tendencies. Like all assimilated people, they want to be more Catholic than the Pope. They haven't lived with the Arabs. If a referendum were held you would find a majority amongst the Sephardim support the idea of a Palestinian independent state, peace, co-existence and collaboration.

Question: What is your vision of the future? Are you optimistic that we will work out our problems?

Answer: I am very pessimistic. Addressing a large audience of army commanders, professors and other famous Orientalists, I said that if we proceed on this course Israel will be remembered as an adventure which lasted maybe a hundred years. I do not want that to happen. I want permanency for Israel in the Middle East, with or without American dollars. We should look at South Africa and learn the moral. We cannot control more than a million and a half Arabs in the occupied territories and another half a million Arabs in Israel. They will always remain Arabs. To preserve Israel we must find a way to satisfy the national demands of the Palestinians. This cannot be done by anybody but ourselves. No western leader has any right whatsoever to tell the Palestinians what is good for them: neither the President of the U.S.A., or Prime Minister Begin, nor Mr. Rabin, Peres or Yadin. Not even President Sadat. It is only for their own representatives to decide. We too were terrorists once. In 1948 I sat on the Supreme Council for Defense and Security with Ben-Gurion and we sent our boys to be

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killed and to kill. Now Mr. Begin speaks strongly about the killing of women and children. But what did we do then? And what are we doing now in Lebanon if not killing men, women and children? We will lose nothing if we speak with Arafat? It will only strengthen us, because we will have sat with him and come to some sort of understanding. Otherwise how can we even keep Jerusalem? Never in Jewish history did we have one complete stretch of land ruled by us as we had until 1967. We must try to live here harmoniously as part and parcel of the area, without longing to be Europeans or Americans. Here we must be a Middle Eastern entity. Only now are we becoming aware of the importance of learning Arabic. Look at this book of mine which was translated without permission by the greatest publishing company in the Arab world, Dar El-Maaref. There is a twenty-one page introduction written by Anis Mansur. It says that this is the book that for thirty years the Arab world has been waiting for. Question: Do you have a final word to say to the "New Outlook" readers?

Answer: Only this - that I am a Jew, I am an Israeli and I am a Zionist by conviction. The only raison d'etre of Israel is its Jewishness, not ruling over millions. For this reason I want peace with the Arabs and with the Palestinians. Without that we shall never have peace in the Middle East. We shall never be able to survive except by the power of our arms and soldiers. There are more than a hundred million Arabs and more millions of Moslems. They may unite some day and try to destroy Israel. That must be averted at all costs. We need a strong army to act as a deterrent, but at the same time let us try with peaceful relations and co-existence. The entire Israeli establishment must be ready to return to the area of the Middle East without neglecting what the West can offer us by way of science, technology, philosophy, etc. But we are Semites and as such we must return to the area. We should discover what unites us with the other peoples living here and not what differentiates us from them. And more power to the editors of "New Outlook" for their courage and devotion to peace and understanding.

Sephardi Federation Leader on Peace

Tel Aviv NEW OUTLOOK in English Jul-Aug 81 pp 46-47

[Article by Nessim D. Gaon, President, World Sephardi Federation: "Reflections on Peace"]

[Text]

The Presidential elections in the USA have had the effect of reactivating negotiations for a Middle East peace. In our world, worn as it is by so many conflicts, the search for peace and stability in the Middle East has aroused more passion and interest among peoples, nations and governments than almost any other focus of conflict.

The global political chess-board is in flux, and the divisions into spheres of influence agreed upon between the Soviet Union and the United States at Yalta were shaken by last year's events in Afghanistan and the armed conflict between Iraq and Iran. In addition

to these political and strategic considerations, enormous economic interests come into play: concern for oil supplies has radically altered the rules of the political game and shaken up old alliances.

Both the Arab supporters of the Rejection Front and the Israeli nationalists are hardening their positions from one day to the next. In such a context, where morality, fairness and common sense are so often overruled, can one expect reason to get the better of passion or justice - of military and economic power, or that this part of the world will stop writing its history in the blood of its children?

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You may think this belongs more to the category of wishful thinking than likely political forecast. But these same political, strategic and economic interests are bound, sooner or later, to cause a change in the balance of forces in the region and the Big Powers will have to reach an understanding or face the risk of confrontation in a conflict that could prove fatal for all protagonists.

All those who still believe in the goodness of man may be allowed to hope that the people themselves - Arab and Jewish alike - will move ahead of their own governments in forming contacts and dialogue. For no Jewish or Arab mother, wife or head of family, whether hawk or dove in outlook, can remain unmoved by the record of mourning and suffering caused by continued violence and recurrent wars, however pernicious the influence of official propaganda may be. The time has come for this multitude of anonymous individuals, the men and women of good will, to express themselves and learn to get to know each other better. It is a process that has already begun, both in Israel and abroad.

Some Israelis and Jews living abroad have been openly and frequently in constructive and courageous dialogue, to criticize the policies of the Israeli government and political parties on such issues as settlement in the territories, the jurisdictional definition of Palestinian autonomy and the inevitable consequences of these policies.

The Arab world must admit that first, Israel exists, and second - that it is there to stay. Israel, for its part, must understand that given its geographic situation, its history and origins, it must live with the Arab world, co-exist with it, with mutual respect for every state's right to exist and to absolute security for all.

The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel is the most striking manifestation of the desire for peace on the part of the heads of State of both nations.

President Sadat displayed immense political courage in coming to Israel. He presented his concept of peace with the greatest clarity and loyalty, and his proposals were favorably

welcomed on the Israeli side. It was through negotiations, sometimes difficult but always constructive, that the peace treaty materialized between two peoples who have been engaged in fratricidal war for thirty years. In order to achieve this peace, Israel did not

hesitate to agree to extensive concessions to Egypt, which is intent on recovering all the territories occupied since the Six-Day War.

Why has this peace process not been extended to the neighboring Arab states?

When will the leaders who are entrusted with responsibility for the fate of their peoples begin to realize that, even though policies may at first be diametrically opposed, it is only through discussion and negotiation that the conditions for understanding can be arrived at.

It was around the negotiation table that the erstwhile enemies of long standing, France and Germany, finally arrived at a situation whereby today they are leading members of the emerging partnership of Europe.

Would it be far-fetched to think that similar direct talks between Israel and its close neighbors, such as Jordan and Syria, could also make it possible to pinpoint the Palestinian problem - which cannot, under any circumstances, be evaded - and to facilitate a solution. The Palestinian people ought to be master of their own fate. But the time has come for them to solemnly renounce their Charter, which aims at the destruction of the State of Israel, and to offer all the necessary guarantees. How much longer must we wait to see other heads of State follow the example of President Sadat, and take a similar initiative?

Is it not urgent and vital to defuse the situation; this would mean that one side renounce acts of violence which, though seen as acts of war, are acts of violence committed against targets that may be civilians, including children, and for the other side to renounce the policy of settlement in the territories, a cause of so much unrest and aggravation?

It is time that men of good will on both sides came forward to speak out.

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Can the Middle East go on being the powder-keg that it is today, and the object of such passion on all sides, without becoming a mortal danger to all? Why is it beyond the powers of imagination for men and women of good will and courage, who represent no one but themselves but who, in the final instance, are the people most involved in the conflict since it is their own lives and those of their children that are at stake - to be able to set up one or more international committees with the following objectives, without setting any exclusive conditions:

1. to exchange points of view and, in doing so, seek common ground!
2. to learn to get to know each other, with a view to creating a climate more conducive to understanding;
3. thereby to become one of the bridges vital for a more constructive dialogue between the nations and their governments!
4. to contribute to the achievement of an overall peace settlement, involving the Palestinians, that would help realize the human, intellectual and energy potential of this region, making it into one of the strongest and most prosperous regions of the world.

This notion was proposed during a Collo-

quium which brought together delegates from all the Mediterranean countries - Arab and Israeli, around the same table.

This is a project that should certainly be encouraged, provided it is not exploited by any political group on either side to further its own partisan interests that would detract from its credibility and effectiveness. In this context, the World Sephardi Federation clearly has a leading role to play.

Given their origin, their lives in the Arab countries, their perfect understanding of all aspects of the character, traditions and public, political and social life of the Arab world, the Sephardi Jews - those who originate from the Arab countries - could become the initiators and promoters of such contacts so vital for the attainment of a climate that would nurture detente and understanding.

Then the time will come for a Summit Conference attended by representatives of all the peoples and states concerned, without exception.

It is high time we all bore in mind the fact that we are all the Children of Abraham, be it through Issac or Ishmael.

May this call for fraternity not remain unanswered.

Sephardim: Peace With Egypt

Tel Aviv NEW OUTLOOK in English Jul-Aug 81 pp 48-50

[Article by Mordecai Jules Soussan: "Sadat, Sephardim and the Peace Process"]

[Text]

As a result of the peace treaty with Egypt, Israel has entered a new era of "hopes and fears". "Hopes", on the one hand, because the risk of war with the Arab world has lessened, and because of the opening up of this Arab world which hitherto refused to recognize Israel's existence; whilst on the other hand, "fears" that this society, Ben Gurion, Dayan and Begin all wanted and still want a European bastion of the western world in the Middle East, which in the context of the peace process, degenerates into a Levantine society in the perjorative sense.

But one of the major "hopes" of this era is for the Oriental majority - the 60% of Jews from Arab countries that Sadat, through his initiative, has helped to decolonize and whose condition he helped normalize.

Until the Rais' visit to Jerusalem, being a Jew from the Arab countries was a malediction, the sign of Cain. It was also the mark of a condition of inferiority reserved for Jews from Islamic countries by the Ashkenazis who proclaimed themselves Europeans and westerners, and who absolutely rejected any

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reference to the east, or to the Arab world.

In an interview given to Eric Rouleau in "Le Monde" of March 9, 1966, David Ben-Gurion - the first Prime Minister of Israel, during the fifteen most important years of her history - declared: "We do not want Israelis to become Arabs. It is our duty to fight against that Levantine state of mind which corrupts men and societies; we must preserve the authentic Jewish values as they were formed in the Diaspora".

It is exactly in this state of mind that a deep contempt for the Arab world, for the east and its culture and for Oriental Jews as Arab citizens have been taught in Israel. Initially, the Oriental Jews did their best - either consciously or otherwise - to distance themselves from their past in Islamic countries. They were helped in this by the anti-Arab attitude of the dominating Ashkenazis or European society with which they wanted to identify - or more exactly - with which they had been conditioned to identify. Thus, when they had to make a decision regarding the conflict with the Arab world, those from the east are in the main more conservative, more nationalist, more chauvinist and more anti-Arab than other Israelis; and so too they are more sensitive to calls from the right.

In fact, their behavior has been determined by the psychological conditioning of the Middle East conflict, by a rather unhappy past in the Arab countries and, mainly, by the attitude manifest towards them by "the others" - those of European origin.

In his speech of November 20, 1977, to the Knesset, President Sadat pointed out that the crux of the Israeli-Arab conflict is 70% a psychological problem. With regard to the Oriental Jews, Sadat put up a double barrier: one separating Israelis from the Arab world, and the other being the Ashkenazi society which stands between the Arab world and Oriental Judaism.

Observers who related the enthusiastic welcome to Sadat remarked that the people who were crowded in the streets were mostly of Oriental origin. For example, one patriarch from Yemen who among the cheerfulness exclaimed: "Like our ancestor Abraham, this man is the messenger of God. . ." Or another man and sometimes poet who composed a peace song to the glory of the Rais.

Oriental Jews, who were also fierce nationalists, tried to forget their origins in order to be accepted. They did their best to justify themselves, declaring "We are more Jewish and more Zionist than you can be".

Since Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, those same Jews now want to free themselves of guilt, admitting for the first time "We are Jews from Arab countries; we are Arabic Jews". A well-known example is that of Shalom Imbari, an Israeli radio journalist at the Israeli delegation to the 1977 Cairo conference. We were 12 journalists on a boat trip up the Nile. Inspired by the beautiful weather and the unique moment, Shalom Imbari, of Iraqi origin, suddenly exclaimed "In fact my name is Salim, not Shalom. And I am an Arabic Jew".

The writer, Haim Gouri, a poet of the Independence generation and a Davar correspondent at the time, a true product of this Ashkenazi-dominated culture, reacted first: "Such words are worse than the destruction of an armored division", and he asked Imbari to retract what he had said. Imperturbable Imbari, however, continued: "In fact, there is no Jewish nation - there is an Arabic Jewish people". Shalom-Salim Imbari will not deny himself when invited to explain on Israeli TV.

Imbari is no exception. To be convinced, one only need ask the inhabitants of an Oriental district. Another significant example is the Israeli Moroccan community's welcome to Mohamed Maradji, the only Moroccan journalist who followed Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. In his book "Salaam, Shalom" he relates his welcome and the way in which everyone, including officials and ministers of Moroccan origin, greeted him like a long-lost brother. "Aharon Abuhateira, Religious Affairs Minister, and David Levy, Minister of Absorption, embraced me in their arms and said that if I didn't have dinner in their homes, they would be offended".

After returning from Ismalia with Begin, Nessim Gaon of the World Sephardi Federation came back convinced of the necessity to include Sephardis in the peace negotiations. The Sephardis feel that perhaps the Israeli leaders and diplomats - who are prisoners of their misunderstandings with regard to the Arabs - are ruining the peace they have found. Sephardi representation in the peace process

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was only symbolic, as was Sephardi presence at the signing of the peace treaty in Washington and during Prime Minister Begin's official visit to Cairo. Since then, no Sephardis, either from the Diaspora or from Israel, have participated in the peace process.

David Sitton of the Sephardi Community Council in Jerusalem and Chief Editor of the only Sephardi monthly - "Bamaharaha" ("Fighting") - comments: "Peace was concluded without us because we are not entitled to give our opinion at the level of decision-making". Furthermore, he could not resist pointing out: "That's why negotiations have taken nearly two years and the incentive and the confidence seen at the start are gradually disappearing".

The Black Panther Movement in 1971 was the first manifestation of an Oriental left-wing. Initially it was created to denounce the Sephardis' conditions in Israel, but it went on to adopt a stand on the Palestinian question. The Movement claimed that: "It is unthinkable that one nation realize its national aspirations at the cost of another's. A common language with the Palestinians must be found immediately". Until then only the Israeli extreme left had made such a statement.

The Black Panthers did not receive satisfying support from their people during the General Elections. The Sephardis were then not ready to hear such language. However, in 1975 Elie Eliachar - a well-known Sephardi leader and one-time assistant to Professor Magnes,

Chairman of Brit Shalom - defended the idea of a Palestinian state co-existing in peace beside Israel in his book "Living With Palestinians". In the same year he was appointed Chairman of the Israel Palestine Peace Committee whose first duty was to commence dialogue with the P.L.O. in Paris.

One of their most important events was the 14th Conference on the History of Moroccan Judaism which was attended by the Ambassadors of Israel and Morocco, intellectuals and politicians, Jews and Moslems, Moroccans and Israelis of Moroccan origin. The issue on the creation of a Palestinian state received a favorable response among Israelis of Moroccan origin, but was not submitted for general debate. Some of them accepted the idea of a discussion with the P.L.O. if they were to recognize Israel.

Ovadia Yosef, the Sephardi Chief Rabbi of Israel, is well known for his religious erudition and for his fierce reticence to take a stand on political issues. Thus when in September 1979 he publicly declared himself in favor of restoring the occupied territories and of dialogue with the P.L.O., he provoked great emotion throughout the country. He had contributed to the destruction of a double myth: the so-called unconditional alignment of Israeli religious circles to the extreme thesis of "Gush Emunim" and the "Greater Israel" movement; and the alleged hostility of Oriental Jews to peace, compromise and rapprochement with the Arab world in general.

The Sephardi people brought Begin to power because of the socio-economical situation, but after two years of a Likud administration the situation was a disaster, for Israelis in general and for the Orientals especially. The most underprivileged among them, who were always promised better housing conditions, are stagnating in their slums without any hope for change. According to the latest data the social distance between the Ashkenazis and the Sephardis - which all the political parties, especially Begin's, had promised to bridge - has become an established institution, and is getting worse. With utterly unjustified self-confidence, the political leaders are declaring that they have the Sephardis in their pockets and will support us in spite of everything.

Most remarkable in this context is the increasing tendency among the Sephardis to denounce the settlement policy of the government, "which gives billions of pounds to settlements in the territories whilst declaring that it has not even one tenth of the amount needed to resolve our own housing and social problems. One must remember that the majority of Sephardis do not care for the colonization of occupied territories, and in fact they are only a very small minority in the settlements and "Gush Emunim".

In November 1979 the Black Panther leaders Charlie Biton and Saadia Marciano led a demonstration and occupied the Elazar Moshav, on the Bethlehem-Hebron road, for a few hours. This was a remarkable event quite removed from those organized by the "Shalom Akhshav" (Peace Now) Movement. However, the Israeli press could find nothing to say about it except to denounce it.

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In March 1980 the Executive Committee of the World Sephardi Federation severely criticized the social policy of Begin's government, as well as the official policy in the occupied territories. Nessim Gaon declared to the Israeli press that: "Jewish settlements in Arab neighborhoods have no useful function. They provoke revolt among the Arabs and weaken Israel's position - even among her friends - around the world. Observers pointed out that such declarations from a man considered a close friend of the Prime Minister, were extremely important. Nessim Gaon went on to criticize the government's economic policy, which, he said, "bears unjustly upon wage-earners and the underprivileged, and favors the well-provided".

There is already some speculation in certain Sephardi circles about creating an alternative power, Perhaps a "Sephardi coalition". It was explained that for the majority Begin has lost his aura; some of those who believed in him will perhaps remain loyal through the strength of habit and sociological gravity. But there is a new generation of youngsters who are excited, who don't have the same respect and patience their elders have. They will not wait another 30 years for change. And the sheer weight of numbers is in their favor; voting together, they could decide tomorrow who will take charge. Deceived by Begin, and full of resentment for the Labor party, Oriental Jews are now politically and psychologically ready for what was unthinkable yesterday.

Attitudes Toward Begin

Tel Aviv NEW OUTLOOK in English Jul-Aug 81 pp 51-53

[Interview with David Sitton, President of the Sephardi Council in Jerusalem, by Elena Danan: "Begin or the Great Failure"]

[Text]

Question: You have been one of the creators of the Irgun, and then a member of Lehi after the scission. What do you think of Menahem Begin, your former comrade-in-arms?

Answer: I left the organization as soon as Begin took over. I was always opposed to his ideas, his methods, his actions and his leadership. He lacks contact with reality, and he has never understood the Oriental masses with whom he has no real contact. In his eyes, their only merit is to constitute a fount of votes at election time; he holds power thanks to them.

Question: How do you explain this?

Answer: Oriental Jewish communities, materially unprovided for and subjected to horrible conditions of integration, I have known the nightmare of Maabaroth before living in the very small flats in Chicounim which were assigned to young couples without children, and which turned quickly into overcrowded slums. Salaries of family heads were those of caretakers, workers and employees. Rootless, rejected from society and broken, those men looked for an outlet for their resent-

ment and their dissatisfaction with Labor Establishment, turning their hope towards the opposition. And the opposition was the Herut Party. On its side, Oriental Jewish youth wasn't especially led by any Socialist Youth Movement and, in fact, the youth had admired Begin as a patriot for a long time. The Labor party pushed these communities towards Herut. The system of "Proteksia" and total dependence upon ramified institutions controlled by this party reduced them to a state of permanent obedience until Election Day. At every General Elections, the Oriental Jews transferred more and more of their votes to Herut.

Question: Do you think they still support it?

Answer: Once elected, Begin created a committee in charge of a reform limiting the number of ministries for both economical and efficiency reasons. This was a masquerade, for there was no reform at all !!! In fact, he followed the example of the Labor party whose incapacity and corruption he denounced before taking power. He increased the number

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of ministries using up public resources and creating inflation. This should have shown us Begin's carelessness for his own promises. David Levy is the only minister in Herut who is representative of the Oriental Jews. But in fact, Begin has no consideration for him. For example, David Levy was offered a gigantic project for the rehabilitation of shanty towns by Nessim Gaon. The forecasted budget had to increase to 1,200 million dollars, half of it to be provided by the Diaspora who kept its promises and raised 600 million dollars, but the government did not honor its own. So this ambitious project failed and today the Ohalim movement has to organize wild and symbolic settlements in several Israeli towns to protest against the government's incapacity.

Oriental Jews are disappointed and they do show it. Henceforth their slogan is "Begin, we brought you to power, we shall bring you down!"

Question: Oriental masses are attracted by Herut nationalism despite their way of life in Arabic countries. Don't you think this contradiction might be explained by their religious approach to Zionism?

Answer: Not at all. I am convinced that Oriental Jews came to Israel because of their Zionist ideals, rather than because of mysticism.

Jews from Arabic countries have often been persecuted and humiliated in their native lands. Just remember that in Yemen, for example, a Jew was not allowed to hold up his head when passing an Arab in the street. In Morocco, in Algeria or in Tunisia, their lot improved with the arrival of the French. Until then they had to suffer many humiliations and were constantly the victims of all kinds of swindling by the governors. Herut has widely exploited those bad memories. Before its ascent to power, all that this party had to offer them was one or two seats in the Knesset. Oriental Jews could not know what Herut would assign them once in the majority. Now they know! There has never been a big love affair between the Oriental communities and Begin, it was rather, an 'episode'.

Question: Is David Levy able to stir up fire at the right time?

Answer: In fact, he succeeded in becoming the spokesman for workers in Herut. He delivered populist speeches to the Oriental masses from whom he comes. But everyone

knows that he really belongs to the Establishment. Although working to defend the interests of underprivileged people, David Levy remains the target of critics formulated against the policy of his government. For example, his attempt to re-establish some of the basic food subsidies withdrawn by Begin's government failed. It was not his fault - he has no real power to implement his good intentions.

Question: Do you think that the Sephardi situation is still locked?

Answer: Since Ben Gurion, the successive Israeli governments considered Eretz Israel as the Ashkenazis' own property. But some people will say that Begin supported the election of a Sephardi to the Presidency. As a matter of fact, President Navon has no real power; his main function is to welcome officials. He does care about social problems, nevertheless he can only deplore them. Thirty years passed without seeing any positive change in the Oriental Jews' condition in Israel. Ashkenazi "reign" continues. However, Sephardis have proved their worth and talent, they did in Iraq where they occupied the highest administrative and financial positions, and in Morocco, Algeria, or in France where a great number of intellectuals and businessmen belong to our Sephardi community. We thought that Begin would be the Ben Gurion of the Right. Nowadays I don't expect anything from Begin. From Peres, no more. I place all my hopes in my brothers. I feel sympathy towards Black Panthers in the Knesset and I am grateful to them for having shaken up and, more or less, revolutionized the Establishment.

Question: What is your attitude towards Arabs?

Answer: I was 30 when I led the Arab department of Irgun and Lehi. Thanks to this function I had a system of information throughout the country. I also went on missions in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, where I met the leaders of Druse, Kurd, Maronite and Shiite minorities, our natural allies against panarabism. The State of Israel was just born.

Today we are facing new realities. The coming of President Sadat to Jerusalem broke down fences that seemed to be unshakable. His historical visit is diametrically opposed to all that we could have imagined or expected of him. The fact that his political positions are divergent from ours does not detract from his merit.

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Question: Wasn't it important to start a dialogue with Israel and to lay a basis of understanding?

Answer: We should not forget that the main result of this event is the recognition of the State of Israel and its concretization. The exchange of ambassadors and the orders to establish economical relations are positive, although the normalization process is not proceeding as quickly as we hoped. Sadat's courage exalted the Israeli masses. For my part I cannot forget the warm welcome of the people of Cairo in 1979. They could not stop embracing friends of the Sephardi Federation and myself as soon as they knew that we were Israelis in the Muslim center of El Azhar and of Khan Khalili. And they all wanted to guide us around the old Jewish district of the capital. It was a great moment. President Sadat did not only break the ice with Israel, he also succeeded in triggering the enthusiasm of his own people.

Question: Do you especially think about Oriental Jews when you remember the emotion of Israelis?

Answer: No, I don't think that the Ashkenasis were any less excited. Sadat fired the whole Israeli population with enthusiasm. On the other hand, I think the Sephardis' participation in the peace process should have been equal to that of the Ashkenasis. It is astonishing and very disappointing that the Israeli government did not think to include Sephardi advisers in the different delegations. It was absurd to nominate Ben Elissar as the Israeli Ambassador to Cairo. Only his friendship with Begin seems to have awarded him this high-level responsibility. Neither his education nor his culture, or the world to which he belongs intended him for such a mission.

Question: The negotiations on autonomy are in deadlock. How do you see the solution to the Palestinian problem?

Answer: President Sadat does not care about autonomy, because he knows that he cannot bring the "pourparlers" to a successful agreement without the agreement of the Palestinians. What he wants is to gain time, so that he simply exchange the slogans. It is not worth it, because he knows that even the most moderate Palestinians reject them. The Rais is not able to give them what they want, the destruction of Israel. The only solution I can see is a progressive one, like the process started by Egypt. It is out of the question to face the creation of a Palestinian State in the West Bank separated from Jordan. At any rate, such a state could not be possible either on a political or economical level. It is obvious that Israeli forces must stand along the Jordan river. One should not forget that if we still exist, it is thanks to our defensive power. Even if we reached a peace agreement, nothing would change. Such an agreement may not by itself constitute a guarantee. For exactly the same reason France and West Germany still maintain the relationship that we know. Why should we take more risks?

However, it is absolutely necessary that as a country in the Middle East, Israel works for its integration to the family of nations in this region. I am convinced that once we set up a federation including Israel and a Jordanian Palestinian State, we can put an end to the mutual fear. The Palestinians' hate towards Arab leaders like King Hussein of Jordan or President Assad lies hidden from the surface, so at least they will agree to such a solution and will promote a Middle East version of the Swiss situation.

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Ashkenazi Cultural Hegemony

Tel Aviv NEW OUTLOOK in English Jul-Aug 81 pp 17-21

[Article by Sammy Smouha: "Ashkenazi Hegemony"]

[Text]

Sammy Smouha is a Professor of Sociology at the Haifa University. He graduated from U.C.L.A. and taught at Washington University in Seattle. He is a specialist in inter-ethnic, inter-racial relations and in the problems of minorities in Israel and other countries. One of the most troubling aspects of the Knesset elections was the signs of ethnic antagonism and division between Sephardi and Ashkenazi Jews. The following article which appeared in the New Outlook publication, Les Sepharades et la Paix, contributes to an understanding of some of the background to this tension.

In Israel, as elsewhere, the cultural basis of the community rift consists in contradictions between cultures, values and characteristics of individuals from different communities. These cultural differences often cause attitudes of condescendence and superiority on one side, and a feeling of inferiority and alienation on the other.

The dominant community tends to impose its own culture upon the others either through education, mass-media, jurisdiction, symbols of their national patrimony or other normative domains. Generally, this tendency rests upon contempt for the values of the weaker community, which is minimized, oppressed and made conspicuous in an effort to ensure that it does not gain national superiority. Thus, we speak of a "cultural hegemony" in a situation where one community rules the others.

This cultural issue cuts across the question of social stratification; that is to say, the members of one community are not equal in terms of education, professional occupation, standard of living, prestige or participation in decision-making. The inequality is not limited to the distribution of resources; it is also expressed in an inequality of opportunities. Such inequalities give us licence to discuss social stratification: a social cleavage accompanies community rifts whereby members of one community congregate in a certain social class, and members of other communities in another. Cultural hegemony and social stratification can cause existing disparities to disappear, as cultural differences blend and equality grows; or, on the contrary, a process of stabilization, or even intensification of these disparities occurs.

In the latter case, one can speak of "institutionalization". Social stratification or cultural hegemony institutionalize themselves when they crystallize into familiar models and are transformed into permanent phenomena, enduring from one generation to the next, and

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finally becoming accepted as the norm. They are perceived as being inevitable and, to some extent, even desirable.

Community Stratification

There are many instances illustrating advanced institutionalization of community stratification in Israel. Here we will demonstrate a few of these:

1. Substantial community stratification

The distribution of socio-economic resources among the Jewish population is today about 1 to 2, or even more. The average income of, and concentration of "superior" jobs among Ashkenazis is twice that of the Orientals. The percentage of Ashkenazis owning spacious apartments is also more than double the number of Orientals. Among post-secondary, non-university educated persons, the gap is 1 to 5, and 1 to 10 in the case of higher education.

The disparity in the distribution of positions of influence is much greater. Participation by Orientals in national decision-making is negligible: in the government only 3 out of 17 ministers are non-Ashkenazi; in the Jewish Agency Executive, only 2 members out of 23, and on the Central Committee of the Histadrut, 9 out of 23. Their representation at management level is even weaker: 2 out of 17 in the ministries and 1 out of 18 in the Jewish Agency. All 17 members of the management of the industrial union are Ashkenazi. In the upper echelons of the political parties, Orientals constitute between 15% and 20% of the establishment: 15% in Mapam, 17% in the Liberal party, 20% in the Labor party, 26% in Herut and 29% in the N.R.P. But it is natural that Orientals are appropriately represented among local authorities and workers' councils. Indeed, we have a Supreme Judge who is Sephardi; the I.D.F. has two Sephardi generals, and even our President is Sephardi. The Orientals stand at the crossroads of power and therefore have no decisive power themselves. The very size of the social classes in Israel clearly reflects the double socio-ethnic rift. Lower class families, living on or beneath the border of

poverty, are almost exclusively Oriental. The working class is, in the majority, also Oriental. The intermediary class of technicians, employees, teachers and tradesmen is heterogeneous. The upper middle class – the ruling elite of academics, high officials, management, industrialists and diamond merchants is almost exclusively Ashkenazi.

By implication the clearly ethnical separation between the elite and the underprivileged classes is even more grave. Large numbers of Orientals among the latter classes leads to a negative worldwide classification of Orientals – making it seem as if the majority belong there, when in fact they scarcely form one-third of these classes. In the absence of a poor class of Ashkenazis, all Orientals are perceived as needy. The Ashkenazi majority among the upper classes, on the other hand, leads to a positive classification of Ashkenazis, which credits them as being particularly gifted and as constituting the kinetic energy of the country. This situation impedes possibilities for change since the upper classes retain the power of decision regarding distribution of resources and cultural and political activity. The Ashkenazi elite has no interest in introducing radical changes which might question the privileges of the dominant community from which it comes.

In the past Ashkenazis were the beneficiaries of better starting conditions – they had longer standing in the country, were better educated, they knew better Hebrew and had purchased more land. They were also more prepared as a pressure group. Furthermore, having less children, they coddled them more – both in the past and today. Besides the regular class machinery, there is in Israel institutionalized discrimination which, apparently, has no influence on the community problem, but which in fact injures the Orientals and leads to institutionalized community stratification. One example of such institutionalized discrimination is the system of subsidies in Israel since the twenties; during that period the Yishuv received its first gifts. An analysis of these subsidies reveals that the most part were absorbed by the capital, rather than being

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channelled into subsidizing basic products, or into the underprivileged classes. Thus, Israel subsidizes the essentially Ashkenazi upper classes.

2. Community Stratification - A Permanent Phenomenon

If the condition of the Orientals is constantly being improved, that of the Ashkenazis has not remained static. In a society like this, with an accelerated rate of development, all classes benefit. The disparities did not disappear - they were stabilized. The community split in the average income per person has remained the same since the thirties. We hope that the education system will work towards equality between the communities. The disparity in education among the population of students indicates that education, paradoxically, is being used as an instrument of institutionalization of community stratification, instead of closing the social gap.

3. Community Stratification - an Informal Legitimization

If a belief in community equality and integration exists, a belief in the under-development of Orientals exists too. In accordance with the "liberal" ideology existing among the population, the Orientals would fail either because they "don't make any effort", or because they are not "capable". The logic of this ideology demands that Orientals change their mentality - a process that would take more than one generation. It implies that the social disparities are inevitable, that they characterize all societies and that we have to learn to live with them. The public is tired of vain speeches about poverty and so yields to this reality. Thus, community stratification profits from a latent legitimization and institutionalizes itself into a permanent phenomenon, considered inevitable.

Paternalistic Ideology

Ashkenazi cultural hegemony in Israel relies upon the solid belief that Ashkenazis are superior, and Orientals inferior. The former

consider themselves Westerners, though most of them come from Eastern European countries - whose culture is very different from that of the West. Orientals are defined as originating in Near Eastern, under-developed countries, though they underwent an intensive process of westernization in their original countries.

The paternalistic approach of Ashkenazis towards Orientals has deep historical roots. It finds its identification in the new Ashkenazi Yishuv, with the condescending attitude of Europeans towards non-Europeans reflected in their rejection of the Palestinian Arabs and the old Yishuv itself which was imbued with Oriental culture. This ideology conveys the idea that Orientals are retarded, that their capacities are limited and, consequently, that they cannot become equal partners in the national project. They are subjects for support and rehabilitation, and since they cannot prove their capacity it is impossible to give them positions of leadership. The elders represent a "desert generation" for whom there is no remedy. But their children have similar problems too: the essential problem is reflected in the words of former Chief-of-Staff Mordechai Gur who spoke of a "retarded mentality deeply rooted in under-developed modes of thought, from which even the academic Orientals cannot free themselves sufficiently."

This paternalistic ideology not only destroys all hope for positive change in the condition of Orientals, it also totally denies equality. Most significant are leaders' proclamations which crystallize the stereotypes and sway public opinion. In 1969, the Minister of Education and Culture, wrote "One of our stronger apprehensions when approaching the cultural question is how the increase in new immigrants obliges Israel to re-align its cultural level with that of its neighbors. We are far from considering our Oriental immigrants as a bridge to our integration in an Arabic-speaking world. Our objective is to imbue them with a western mentality and to prevent ourselves from being led into an unnatural Orientality." (Abba Eban, Voice of Israel, 1969).

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In 1962 the first Israeli Prime Minister declared: "We do not want Israelis to become Arabs. It is our duty to struggle with the Levantine spirit which corrupts people and societies. We have to preserve the authentic Jewish values crystallized during our exile." (David Ben Gurion, in an interview with "Le Monde"). Another of Ben Gurion's proclamations in 1965 throws more light onto the underlying meaning of this judgement of Oriental Jews: "The Jews from Morocco are not educated. Their customs are Arabic. They love their wives but they beat them... Perhaps in the third generation something different will emerge from the Oriental Jews. But I do not see it happening yet. The Moroccan Jew has assimilated.... I don't want to see the Moroccan culture here". (David Ben Gurion in an interview with Moskin, 1965).

One of the fathers of Zionism, from another side of the movement, wrote in 1926: "We, the Jews, have nothing in common with the Orient. As long as the untutored masses of our people remain close to the relics of their Oriental past, we must force them away from it; this we pursue in every honest school, to this life itself aspires in arduous ways. We came to Eretz Israel, firstly, for our national well-being, and secondly, according to Max Nordau's formulation, to extend the borders of Europe to the Euphrates. In other words, we must, today and tomorrow, extirpate from the Jews of Eretz Israel all traces of the Oriental soul." (Zeev Jabotinsky, "The Orient" Haderech, Vol 7, p. 18, 1972).

The author emphasizes the cultural and technological superiority of the West and the backwardness of the Orient. He adds, "If the Occident and the Orient really represent two kinds of fundamental mentalities, we can categorically affirm that we Jews belong to the west, and that we have nothing in common with the Orient."

The author of these lines, Zeev Jabotinsky, published this article in the Russian-language weekly paper of the Revisionist movement. To prevent us believing that it may have lost its relevance, the article was translated in Hebrew

in the seventies and was published in 1972 in Haderech, the organ of the Liberal party; the editorial staff added the following: "Written a few years ago, this article is still relevant even today. It testifies to the liberal spirit which animated one of the leaders of our movement of national renaissance."

This categorial rejection of the Orient and culture of Oriental Jews did not fail to express itself in the politics of the Yishuv and the State of Israel. Such politics legitimize as well the community stratification, justifying the concentration of Oriental Jews among the lower classes of Israeli society through their adherence to an under-developed original environment; furthermore, we are assured that their mentality is primitive and that their under-developed conditions prevail – despite efforts deployed by the Israeli government.

The Dominant Culture

Ashkenazi culture is presented as the national culture of Israel whilst expression of the Oriental culture is rejected. We have reached a point whereby today the Sephardi accent is ridiculed. Even on a religious level – the only domain wherein Ashkenazis and Sephardis are, for historical reasons, equal – the norms are Ashkenazi. For example, the unified version of prayers in the army and in the programs of religious public schools or Yeshivot. School books, principal themes in literature and art, and the names of streets all testify to the articulation of an Ashkenazi heritage. The Oriental culture is firmly enclosed within a communal framework, visible in evenings of Oriental songs and folk dancing. Contemporary studies speak of the Oriental Jews as if they were outside of history itself. The Orientals are almost absent from the history book by Ettinger and from the book that Lacqueur dedicated to the history of Zionism; the only community it evokes is that of the Ashkenazis.

The Cultural Elite

Ashkenazi hegemony does not only express itself in the rejection of Oriental culture, but

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also in the composition – homogeneous communally speaking – of the cultural Israeli elite as a trademark that the latter awards itself. Oriental Jews constitute a negligible percentage of the teaching profession, of researchers, writers and poets. Similarly, in the management of the media: among speakers, producers, directors, journalists, in the upper echelon of the Ministry of Education - etcetera. This mono-communal composition by the cultural elite constitutes the best guarantee of institutionalizing cultural hegemony.

Cultural Alienation

It is argued that the thesis of cultural hegemony is untrue, that the Oriental masses do not suffer from cultural repression. We are assured that Oriental people abandoned their culture of their own accord, and that they identified with the national culture because they understood that in a technologically advanced society, aspiring to create a culture which serves national unity, there is no place for communal cultural pluralism. Thus the Orientals moved away from all former cultural identification.

This argument is partially correct. Indeed, cultural hegemony decreases with the assimilation of Oriental Jews. The argument of the free cultural integration of Orientals is, on the other hand, absolutely wrong. The sheer weight of cultural hegemony crushed the Oriental heritage and restructured it upon the Ashkenazi model. When a necessary condition for entry into Israeli society is the negation of one's former culture, it is impossible to hope that many will be prepared to pay the price. And Oriental Jews were confronted with a priori rejection of their culture, whereby the rules of concurrence were fixed at their expense. That is the reason why a cultural change became a question of survival for them. They were not in a position to choose whether or not to safeguard their patrimony. Ashkenazis decided for them, and imposed this choice upon them, believing that they acted in the best interests of all concerned.

The situation pushes forward, and the Orientals have begun to organize themselves

in a struggle against community stratification and cultural hegemony. There is an increase in the standard of living, education, socialization, and political sophistication. We must also take into account the two historical events of 1977, the assumption of power by the Likud and the beginning of the peace process, which affected this situation.

Disappointed with the Labor establishment, the Orientals put the Likud into power in the hope that a radical evaluation of their condition would occur. But the new establishment did not improve their situation, for the same reasons that the former government had not bent itself to these problems. In fact, the Orientals' situation worsened during the first two years of the Likud government.

Now, for the first time, the support of the Orientals will not be granted to either establishment a priori. Perhaps the Orientals will find a common cause with movements favorable to community equality. The success of this will depend upon the credibility of their leaders, upon their gift for organization and their capacity for endurance.

The peace process, initiated by President Sadat, has also increased the fighting potential of the Oriental public in Israel. The process of normalization legitimizes the organization of discriminate groups within Israeli society, especially among Orientals. Now, for the first time, they can struggle without being accused of endangering the State. The hour has come when they can turn to those internal conflicts for which they have waited so patiently; now they can ask, categorically, for equality and participation de facto. In a society, released from 'martial law', these claims will be legitimate, credible and acceptable.

Oriental Jews do not aspire to a different culture or identity. They no longer have the intention of becoming a separate cultural reserve. They demand participation, on an equal footing, in the creation of Israeli culture. They simply want to be masters of their own lives, not dependent upon the Ashkenazis. They want to build a society wherein the Oriental dimension can develop entirely and with dignity.

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LIBYA'S SUPPORT OF POLISARIO CONTINUED

PM091422 London THE GUARDIAN in English 9 Sep 81 p 7

[Report by Ian Black: "Libya 'Still Supplies Arms' to Polisario"]

[Text] Libya is still supplying arms to the Polisario guerrillas fighting Morocco for the Western Sahara desert, despite a recent thaw in relations between Colonel al-Qadhafi and King Hassan.

This was revealed yesterday by the Moroccan foreign minister, Mr M'hamed Boucetta, on an official visit to London, when he met Mrs Thatcher and Lord Carrington.

Libya and Morocco patched up their quarrel on the eve of the Nairobi summit conference of the Organization of African Unity in June. Colonel al-Qadhafi, who had recently increased his support for Polisario, donned the mantle of peace-maker in the Sahara, while in return Tripoli managed to avoid condemnation of its intervention in neighbouring Chad.

The turnabout was all the more remarkable for the fact that it came immediately after an intense Moroccan diplomatic campaign to convince the world that Libya was the source of all unrest and instability in northwest Africa.

Mr Boucetta said that he knew that Tripoli "is still helping Polisario. We have asked them to stop this military assistance and we are awaiting new developments."

On the Western Sahara issue in general, the foreign minister said he was "optimistic" about the prospects for a ceasefire and a referendum whose details are being worked out by a seven-country OAU "implementation committee."

He expressed the hope that a referendum would be held in the disputed former Spanish territory "as soon as possible" but reiterated his government's insistence on using the last Spanish census--74,000 residents--as a basis for the poll. Polisario and its chief backer, Algeria, insist on a figure 10 times larger than this and say that the Saharans should be given self-determination.

Mr Boucetta said that Morocco would respect the cease-fire call and insisted that his country "does not attack anyone."

The Western Sahara war began in 1976 when Spain withdrew and the territory was partitioned between Morocco and Mauritania, to the south. Mauritania withdrew and made peace with Polisario in 1979 and since then Rabat has fought the war alone.

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24

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