

Israeli journalist supports compromise

by John Blank

In 1967, during the "six-day war," Israel occupied that part of Jordan which is today referred to as the West Bank.

Israeli journalist and peace activist Danny Rubenstein was, as he is today, a correspondent for the Israeli paper *Davar*, assigned to the West Bank. Speaking at a forum organized by the Portland chapter of the New Jewish Agenda, recently, he contrasted Israel's policies at that time with her policies today.

In 1967, he said, his job was to accompany Israeli cabinet ministers and other officials to meetings with Palestinian officials. Israeli officials then spoke of building some kind of coexistence between the Palestinians and Israel, spoke Arabic, tried to learn, to enquire, to make at least some friends. At that time, there were statements to the effect that the occupation was to be only temporary. But, "I found recently," said Rubenstein, "that there is no such intention today. It is a formal policy of the government (expressed in the talks with Egypt concerning Palestinian autonomy) to annex the West Bank." In the last five years, Rubenstein said he didn't remember even one meeting between Israeli and Palestinian officials.

In the early days of the occupation, Israel did not encourage Israeli settlements on the West Bank. Today, however, government policy is to promote any and all kinds of settlement there. Today, said Rubenstein, the annexation of the West Bank is almost complete: only two years ago, there were 5,000 Israeli settlers there; today, there are 30,000, and in the next two years 100,000 are expected.

If this situation is allowed to continue, he said, the result will be detrimental, not only for the Palestinian inhabitants, but to the very survival of Israel herself.

Already today, Rubenstein said, there is damage to Israeli democracy. "You cannot have a split democracy," he said; yet today, in the West Bank under military occupation, you already have a situation where people are denied basic democratic freedoms. For example, Rubenstein mentioned that West Bank Palestinians need special permission to go abroad, and cannot even stay overnight in Israel, where many of them work. There is very limited freedom of assembly and freedom of the press. Many Arabic newspapers which are available in East Jerusalem are not allowed on the West Bank. "I see this as my problem, not just theirs (the Palestinians)," said Rubenstein. "This situation changes the mentality of every one of us (Israelis)," he continued, referring to the increased militarization of Israeli life, and the changes in moral values necessarily stemming from being an occupying power.

Three courses present themselves, according to Rubenstein. There is the solution advocated by the Begin government: annexation of the West

Bank. This policy will result in a situation where Israel will have a 40 percent non-Jewish minority. In such a situation, Israel would have to result to a life of hideous militarization, worse than what exists today and comparable to what exists in South Africa, to maintain its existence as a Jewish state.

Secondly, there is the solution of expelling the Arabs from the conquered territories. Rubenstein said that most Israelis would oppose this policy; only a handful (less than 200) advocate it; ironically, these are led by a former American, Rabbi Meyer Kahane.

Third, there is the solution of making territorial concessions. "I believe the majority of Israelis support some form of territorial concessions," Rubenstein said, citing polls which show that 70%-75% of Israelis favor some form of territorial compromise. One form of compromise would be a Palestinian state encompassing the West Bank and perhaps part of the East Bank (Jordan) as well (60% of the Palestinians live on the East Bank and technically are Jordanian citizens

today). Rubenstein hopes that this solution will come about.

The present inhabitants of the West Bank will not leave voluntarily, Rubenstein pointed out, because they do not want to become refugees as did the Palestinians who left or were driven from Israel in 1948. Also, in spite of the harsh features of Israeli military rule, West Bank Palestinians view themselves as better off than they would be if they were to move to other Arab states, such as Kuwait or Libya.

Rubenstein strongly disagreed with the attitude, often expressed in the American Jewish community, that Israel should be supported no matter what the policies of its government. "American Jews have the duty to become more involved and understand more (about Israel); and the right, and the duty, to raise your voice. We raise our voices for many things that happen in other countries, so why not for things that happen in Israel? And this is a kind of support too," Rubenstein said.

Rubenstein's trip was arranged by the New Jewish Agenda, a progressive American-Jewish organization.

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Mr. & Mrs. James T. Anderson of Greenwood, South Carolina, were in town visiting their son Kamau Anderson. Their stay included a trip to the coast, a tour of Bonneville Dam & Locks and, above, a farewell potluck at the home of Mary Avery that included 40 guests.
L-R: Julia Fletcher, James T. Anderson, Lola M. Anderson, Mary Avery, Kamau Anderson, and Vivian Richardson.
(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Libraries offer summer fun

North Portland, 512 N. Killingsworth, 284-5622 will have a Sing-along with Mary Rose and Miss Barbara on Wednesday, July 27, 2:30 p.m.

Albina, 3605 NE 15th, 287-7147 will have a program entitled "Up, Up and Away," with the films, "Hang Gliding," "Flight," and "Sky Diving," on Thursday, July 28, 2:30 p.m.

Preschool storytimes for ages 3-5 North Portland (address above) will have storytime on Friday, July 29, at 10:30 a.m.

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