



Economic Dimensions of the Uprising

Author(s): Sheila Ryan

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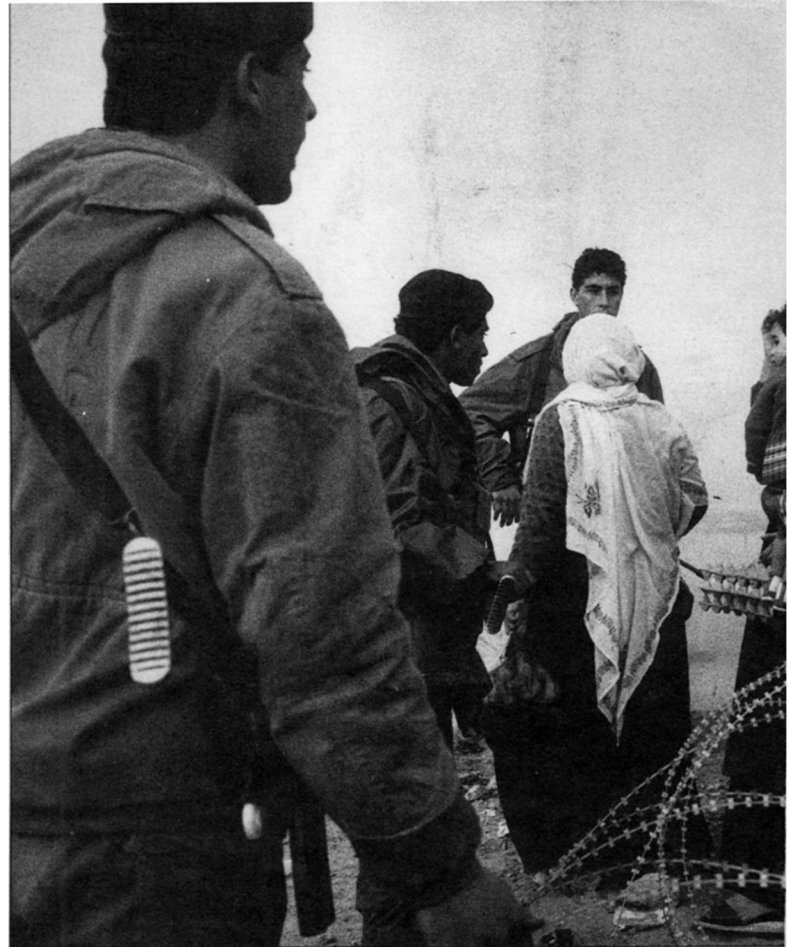
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mote Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation. Willy Brandt's keen appreciation of historic German guilt had contributed to one-sided support for Israel in the German Social Democratic Party as well as the Socialist International. Now there are signs of a new evaluation of German responsibilities. Social Democrat Norbert Gansel struck the note that best summed up the consensus. German policy toward the Middle East must be "neither anti-Israel nor anti-Palestinian," Gansel said during a Bundestag debate on the Middle East last March.

In this spirit, the German Social Democratic chairman of the Europarlament Socialist group, Rudi Arndt, took the lead in inviting Arafat to Strasbourg as an unofficial visitor, while the French Socialist Party tried to block Arafat's visit, largely for domestic political reasons. Building a strong Jewish lobby is a key element in the current French effort to recompose the political spectrum around a "center" defined by its rejection of Jean-Marie Le Pen's anti-Semitism. Arafat's presence on French soil—even though technically on international territory at the European Parliament in Strasbourg—dismayed the organized Jewish community, which in France as elsewhere is the most conservative part of the Jewish population. Under Mitterrand, Paris has renewed the very special relationship with Israel that existed in the 1950s, when Paris and Tel Aviv worked hand in hand to build atomic bombs and combat Arab nationalism in Algeria and Egypt. On the eve of Arafat's visit to Strasbourg, Mitterrand referred to Gaza and the West Bank as the "disputed" rather than "occupied" territories.

In the first exercise of its modest new power to ratify or reject international trade agreements, the Europarlament has expressed its disapproval of Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied territories by holding up ratification of the trade agreement reached last December between Israel and the European Community Council of Ministers. The message is that Israel will lose important European markets for its produce unless it accepts and cooperates with a November 1986 European Community decision to grant the same trade status to the occupied territories as to "neighboring countries"—a de facto first step toward recognition of Palestine as a country separate from Israel and Jordan. ■



Israeli troops impose curfew, turn back food supplies at Shatti Camp, Gaza.

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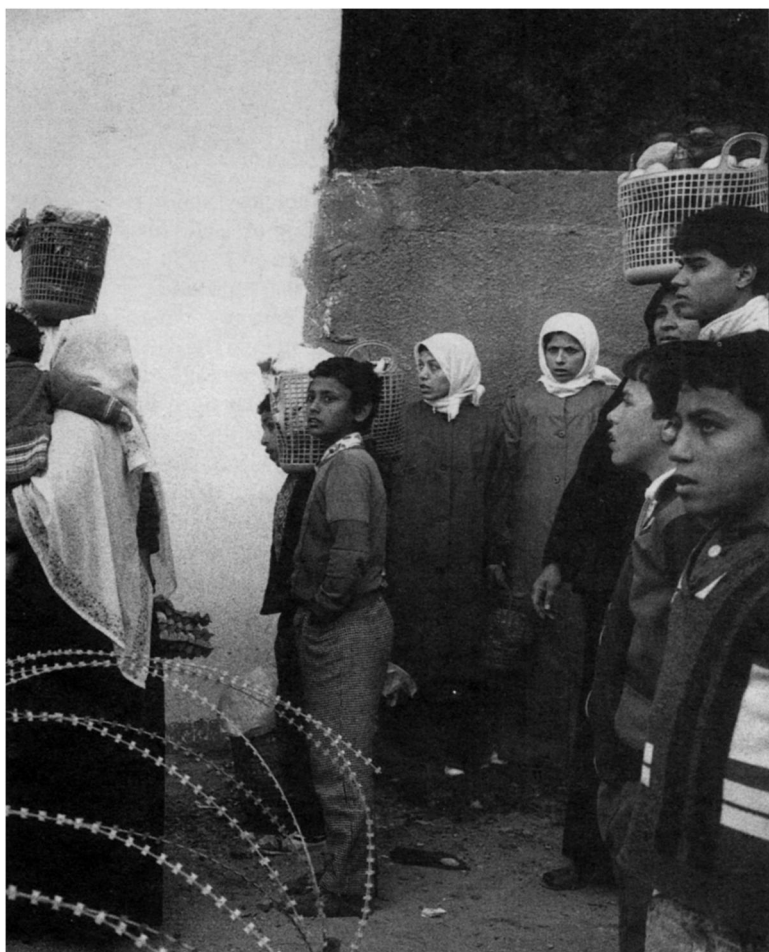
Sheila Ryan

Beyond the cameras, outside the glare of the kleig lights of television talk shows, a quiet but potentially very significant campaign for economic disengagement is developing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

From the Boston Tea Party to Gandhi's Salt March, struggles over economic issues have historically had great importance in anticolonial movements. It is too soon to quantify the actual economic impact or to assess the long-term political significance of this campaign, but clearly it has already eroded the profitability of the occupation for the Israeli government and various economic sectors.

The campaign, moreover, has a role for every Palestinian—the shopper who chooses a Palestinian product over an Israeli one,

Sheila Ryan directs the Middle East Peace Network in New York. She travelled to the occupied territories in August.



the merchant who adheres to the strike schedule of the national leadership, young people working on family or neighborhood garden plots, women pickling their own produce. This multiplicity of modes of struggle politicizes the most mundane aspects of life, and expands enormously the number of active participants in the *intifadah* beyond those directly engaged in demonstrating, stone-throwing or formal political organizing.

Over the 21 years of Israeli occupation, a clear economic pattern has emerged, along classic colonial lines:

- The occupied areas have served as a captive market for Israeli products, with the interests of Palestinian producers subordinated to those of Israelis in a complex system of Israeli military orders. Against this the Palestinians have launched a campaign of preferential buying of Palestinian products.
- The occupied areas have served as a source of labor over whose conditions of work Palestinians themselves exercise virtually no control. Now some limitations are being placed on Israeli labor exploitation: workers refrain from going to their jobs on general strike days and the *intifadah* offers very partial survival options to workers who lose or quit their jobs.
- The Israeli government has been extracting far more in taxes than it spends on services in the occupied territories; this advantage is being cut by a campaign of tax resistance.

Boycotts

The proclamations (*bayanat*) of the United Leadership call frequently for the boycott of those Israeli products for which a Palestinian-produced "national alternative" exists. The market for Israeli goods has declined greatly during the *intifadah*, in part

because of the estimated 25 percent decline in income in the occupied areas. But part of the decline is the result of a conscious, mass political act. It is hard to find a smoker in the West Bank now who puffs Israeli cigarettes, though the Israeli brands were ubiquitous a year ago. The Israeli cigarette manufacturer, Dubek, claims an 80 percent decline in sales to the occupied territories during the first eight months of 1988. "This shows that we can make an effective boycott of a specific product, and that this tactic can be expanded," says Hanna Siniora. Coca-Cola, bottled in Israel, is nearly universally disdained in favor of RC and Viva, both produced in Ramallah, or 7-Up in Gaza.

Shopkeepers in several West Bank towns report that consumers now routinely inquire about the origins of fruits and vegetables, preferring locally-grown produce to the subsidized Israeli produce which has flooded the Palestinian market for years. The demand for the pickles and jams produced by local women's cooperatives appears to be far greater than the relatively small supply, so Israeli and imported processed foods still take lots of shelf space in grocery stores. Israeli dairy products dominate the market, especially in the central region of the West Bank, but a Palestinian dairy now supplies Nablus with *labneh*, a new one is furnishing Tulkarm with yogurt, and a factory in Jneid processes 10,000 liters of Israeli milk daily. A clothing merchant reports that a year ago 60 percent of his inventory was from Israel and only 40 percent from the West Bank; now 70 percent of the clothing he sells is produced in the West Bank. This may say more about the shrinkage of the Israeli market, however, than any expansion for Palestinian producers.

"National products"—from the grape leaves, pickles, jams and dried herbs packed by Palestinian cottage industries to Star soap and Silwani sweets—were displayed at a Bir Zeit exhibition this summer, one of a series. What appears to have made this campaign a success is its flexibility. People are not asked to do without essential products for which the only source is Israel, but only to buy Palestinian products when they are available.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip had been serving as an export market for Israel second only to the United States. In many ways it is more important. It will be difficult or impossible to find alternate export markets for the food, textiles and other labor-intensive products which Israel exports to the occupied areas, since most nearby Arab markets remain closed and these products would not be competitive in Europe or North America.

Strikes

The success of the partial commercial strike is one of the most visible features of the uprising, and it appears to be indefinitely extendable. Businesses now open three hours each morning. For months Israeli soldiers broke locks to force stores to open or welded them shut during hours the leadership called them to open. By the spring, the military governor had to acknowledge a tacit surrender on this point.

On general strike days economic life comes to a standstill: factories, encouraged by the national leadership to work to capacity most other days, are closed; workers stay home from jobs in Israel. Stores remain closed. The dates of the general strikes, usually one or two days a week, are announced in the *bayanat* by the United Leadership. In Gaza, Hamas (acronym for "Islamic Resistance Movement") has shown its local strength by announcing its own additional strike days, but it has failed to achieve

compliance in the West Bank. Occasionally towns have general strikes of their own, to observe the martyrdom of a resident or for some other local purpose. Strike dates and slogans are also painted on walls at night, a forbidden and dangerous activity.

The strike campaign is flexible. Stores open to allow purchase of food and other necessities, but then uniformly close in clear defiance of the authorities. Village women sell produce in the streets of towns and cities, and boys and men hawk sodas and gum through the afternoons, apparently tolerated in light of their economic need.

Merchants selling luxury items or consumer durables like cars and appliances have been especially hard hit. Ironically one Israeli policy saving many from ruin had been intended to inhibit their economic growth. This is the longstanding denial of a credit system in the West Bank. Merchants whose income no longer covers their rent can work out reductions or delays with landlords, who have been urged by the leadership to cooperate. Landlords are able to take less rent because they have no mortgages to pay. When a merchant gives a Tel Aviv wholesaler a postdated check that now bounces, at worst he will lose his stock. This low level of credit has limited business failures.

Workers

Stopping the flow of workers to Israel during general strikes, if even for a day or two at a time, is the first significant control Palestinians have been able to place on the circumstances and conditions of employment in Israel. Most of the workers from the occupied areas employed in Israel continue to go to their jobs except on general strike days. A man in his early 20s, a resident of the Dhaisheh refugee camp and a construction worker for Solel Boneh, explained why:

I hate that I am sweating to build their country instead of working to build up my own country. At the beginning of the *intifadah*, I stayed home for two months. When the leadership calls for a general strike, I will stay home. But I have to work to support my family. Otherwise they will starve. When the leadership decides the right time has come, they will tell us to cut all our ties to the occupier, not to go back to our jobs in Israel at all. Then I'll be happy to obey, because I know even if I am hungry, if my family is hungry, there is a reason for it, to get our national rights. But now is not the time for such a drastic stand.

The percentage of workers who do continue to work in Israel is difficult to estimate and appears to vary considerably by area. Some believe that the figure may be on the order of 75 percent. According to Samir Abdullah Saleh, chair of the economics department at Najah University in Nablus,

There is some numerical decline [in the number of workers], but a much larger decline in efficiency and profitability. Because of the general strikes and the disruption caused by military curfews and closure of areas Israeli employers cannot count on workers showing up regularly. Construction and the textile and garment industries are heavily affected; the most labor intensive branches of the Israeli economy are depressed because of the *intifadah*.

Self-Sufficiency

A key economic goal of the *intifadah* is to move toward "self-sufficiency," and especially to produce a greater share of the food consumed in the occupied areas. While the Palestinians have

been trying to enhance their own agriculture, however, it has also been a target of harsh Israeli repression.

Some advocates of self-sufficiency speak fervently about returning to a traditional model in which the land of each village provided all the needs of its inhabitants. Others promote a less comprehensive but more attainable partial self-sufficiency in produce, meat and dairy. Most of the wheat consumed in the occupied areas, where bread is the fundamental item in the diet, is now imported from abroad. Historically Palestine was self-sufficient in wheat, even an exporter, but most of the once lush wheatfields are in the area seized by the state of Israel in 1948, now planted with cotton and other irrigated crops.

Over half the land in the West Bank has come under Israeli control, and water resources have been diverted to Israeli use. Israeli military orders allow unregulated Israeli agricultural exports into the occupied areas, but West Bank and Gazan farmers must have a permit to export to Israel. The military government grants permits to plant only those crops which do not compete with Israeli production. Such subjugation to Israeli interests has contributed to an overall decline in the number of West Bankers and Gazans employed in agriculture during the occupation.

Palestinian farmers have confronted new difficulties since December 1987. Israeli authorities closed the shops providing farmers with seedlings and fertilizers, a disruption partially offset by voluntary cooperative efforts to procure and distribute essential supplies.

Marketing for export and internal use has also been disrupted. "My business is barely operating," complains an agricultural middleman in Halhoul, a man in his 60s.

I can't make enough now to cover the rent on my shop. You try to bring a truckload of produce to the market in Nablus, but you don't know when you start out if Nablus will be under curfew and you won't get in. You work out a deal to export so many tons of a crop to Jordan, but then maybe the village where it's growing will be punished and not receive an Israeli permit to export.

Many villages have suffered economically when curfews prevented farmers from tending to their crops or herds, although stories abound of neighboring villages assisting by providing water to animals and other aid in such crises. Beit Ummar lost 10 to 20 percent of its plum crop because Israeli military authorities made farmers stay at home just when the early ripening plums needed to be harvested, and then refused the farmers an export permit to Jordan. According to an agronomist with the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee, "the farmers' committee rented a truck to transport their plums and sell them directly to popular committees in different towns. The Agricultural Women's Committee then gave 30 demonstrations of how to make plum jam in the areas where the plums were being marketed."

Deliberate destruction of crops and orchards by Israeli soldiers and settlers has also hurt Palestinian farmers. *FACTS Weekly Review* (Jerusalem) reports that while the village of Azun (near Qalqilya) was under curfew for 15 days in June, its fields were set afire, probably by settlers. Farmers, risking being shot for breaking the curfew, went out to put out the blaze. In many villages large numbers of fruit and olive trees have been uprooted as punishment for stonethrowing. *FACTS* reported in June that in 18 villages a total of 3690 olive trees were destroyed; 4175 fruit and nut trees in six villages; and 450 citrus trees in three villages. In Qatana, soldiers destroyed more than 2,000 trees. The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee estimates the total num-

ber of destroyed trees to be in the tens of thousands. The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee estimates the total number of destroyed trees to be in the tens of thousands.

The development of "household economy" during the *intifadah* has been a practical matter of survival, as cash income declined and as prolonged curfews made access to markets uncertain. It has also been a conscious political campaign in which virtually everyone can participate, a way of encouraging "disengagement" from the occupation and the products of the occupier, and of encouraging a respect for land, culture and tradition.

"We are not talking about a total return to the ways of the past," said Dr. Saleh,

and we are not speaking unrealistically about abandoning the market. We need to put to good use, however, the unemployed resources we have in the labor of students, women and unemployed workers. We can concentrate on building up our reserve for difficult times by encouraging this potential in the household economy. Three years ago we made a workshop on this idea of household economy, which was developed by people in the Voluntary Work Committee, and it was published in *Al-Katib*. But there was really no reaction from people. It only became an actuality during the *intifadah*.

Approximately 70 percent of people in the West Bank continue to live in villages. Village residence has been bolstered, in an ironic way, by Israel's refusal to allow West Bank workers to remain overnight in Israel. Families remain in their villages, even if the worker himself sometimes sleeps "illegally" near his workplace. The Third World pattern of traumatic urban migration is not replicated here, except in the refugee camps.

During the occupation household production declined as opportunities for employment in Israel and restrictions on Palestinian agriculture drew many men away from work on the land, and as the oil boom created employment opportunities elsewhere. When the economic boom in Israel ended in the early 1980s, though, and as the oil economy declined, the need for household production increased.

When the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee recently surveyed villages in the West Bank, it confirmed that household production remains significant: a very substantial number of families continue to raise animals and crops for their own consumption, and most households preserve some foods.

In towns, where many homes have garden space, vegetable plots have sprouted all around. Popular committees in many areas planted communal gardens and distributed the produce to neighborhood households. Committees are distributing goats and rabbits to families, customarily taking repayment in the form of the first offspring which they will then distribute to another family. Even in refugee camps, where gardening space is at a premium, families are raising goats, chickens and rabbits for milk, eggs and meat.

In Kfar Nama, a village near Ramallah, a promising hatchery project is underway. The manager explained that Israeli cross-breed hens available in the market lay twice as many eggs as the eggs being incubated by his cooperative, but require a precisely regulated environment and diet. By basing the hatchery on hens obtained from local Beduins, this project will be able to provide Palestinian households with hens hardy enough to live in the yard and feed on household garbage. "A hundred and fifty projects, small ones like this, would be enough to make the West Bank self-sufficient in eggs," he declared, "instead of relying on Israeli imports as we do now."



Soldiers in Gaza break open shops in attempt to break strike.

Tordai

Tax Resistance

The degree of compliance with calls from the United National Leadership of the Uprising/PLO for tax refusal appears to vary greatly from one town to another. Great resentment about taxes imposed by Israel is universal. As a businessman in Beit Sahur put it, "We are actually paying for their soldiers to continue to occupy us."

Beit Sahur, traditionally known as the site of the Shepherd's Field of Christmas Eve renown, now distinguishes itself as a center of tax refusal. On July 7, Israeli soldiers and tax collectors seized the identity cards of a number of residents in arrears in taxes. The townspeople responded by delivering the identity cards of 300 to 500 others to the Israeli authorities in solidarity. A long curfew followed. At least 12 tax resisters have had their cars seized. Town residents say that 90 percent of the people were refusing to pay taxes. Because factory closures would cause unemployment and reduce national production, factory and workshop owners are exempt from Palestinian strictures against paying taxes.

The picture on tax payment is less clear elsewhere. Long lines of people congregate outside government offices where permits are issued for travel, car registration and other purposes, all of which require evidence of tax payment.

One lawyer in Gaza spoke angrily about a special new registration process on cars; even people who had just registered their automobiles a week or two before the new requirement are forced to pay to reregister. He travels by bicycle instead.

Conspicuous consumption and ostentatious festivity, when not precluded by a decline in income and the ever-present threat of curfew, are frowned upon now in the occupied areas. East Jerusalem hotel owners who used to cater lavish wedding celebrations report only a few weddings on their premises this year, instead of some 180 in the same period last year. This ethic of the *intifadah*, a willingness to sacrifice combined with a shrewdness in discerning the effective ways to sacrifice, provides the Palestinians of the occupied areas with a new force and energy. ■