THE GOOD NEIGHBOR

As a Zionist soldier, civil-rights advocate, and pioneer of joint nonviolent activism between Israelis and Palestinians, Hillel Bardin has dedicated most of his adult life to the pursuit of a most elusive peace.

BY TREY POPP

ILLUSTRATION BY EMILIANO PONZI

The defining moment of Mazen Badra's life as a father came during the second year of the First Intifada. It was 1989, and the 31-year-old Palestinian was returning from Birzeit University in the West Bank, where he had recently begun teaching business administration, to his home in Beit Sahour, a village that abuts the eastern flank of Bethlehem. When Badra arrived, his house was filled with anxious neighbors.

His five-year-old son, the middle of three children, had locked himself behind a bedroom door in terror. Badra quickly learned why. For reasons no one would ever understand, a passing Jewish settler had sprung out of a car, chased the child down, and pinned him to the ground to beat him.

"The neighbors estimated that the man was about 45 years old," Badra recalls. "He had his wife and other people in the car. He put a gun to my son's head, while his foot was on my son's body."

Through the locked door Badra tried to assure his little boy that the family's home was safe. He pled for nearly two hours before his son opened the door. After that, the young boy made a pledge that his father has never been able to forget.

"He said, 'Dad,'—now remember, he's five years old—and he said, 'Dad, when I grow up, I want to buy a gun, and I want to kill that person.'

"That was a turning point in my life," Badra says, 25 years later. "I was left with three options. One, do nothing about it: let your son live with fear and trauma and nightmares and God knows what. Two, raise your son with the desire for hate and revenge. Or three, try to change the situation for you, your family, and your people.

"That was my choice, and it wasn't going to be an easy choice," he continues. "I needed to reach out to, quote-unquote, my enemies."

And so it came to pass that Badra's life became enmeshed with that of Hillel Bardin GEE'74.

IN 1989, Bardin was a longtime resident of Jerusalem who had continued to volunteer as an active reserve soldier in the Israeli army into his early 50s, even though compulsory military service ended at age 45. The year before, he'd done a three-and-a-half week tour of duty in the occupied West Bank four months into the Palestinian popular uprising.

Bardin was born in Mandate Palestine in 1935, but spent his formative years in the United States. The eruption of World War II in 1939, during a family trip to visit his maternal grandfather in America, prevented their return. Yet Israel's pull was strong for Bardin, who from his early adulthood to the present day has considered himself "first and foremost a Zionist who sees the necessity of the Jewish homeland as an unassailable issue." At 30 he moved to Jerusalem with his wife, Anita. Apart from several years pursuing higher education back in the States—Bardin came to Penn to study computer science between 1967 and 1971, during which time he also worked at the medical school's Institute for Environmental Medicine—Israel has been home ever since.

Bardin, a secular Jew with a pensive face framed by a springy beard that has faded from brown to white, was not a run-of-the-mill army reservist. His unassuming demeanor concealed what Penn history professor Michael Zuckerman C'61, who befriended him as a junior faculty member and fellow kindergarten parent in Philadelphia, calls an "ethical athleticism."

"He knows what he thinks is right and what he thinks is wrong, and he thinks that right and wrong have to be connected to your life," Zuckerman says. "Yet he had a remarkable gift for making clear that what he did was what *he did*, and that no one else was expected to be like him. I never experienced Hillel as self-righteous, or holier than me."

In Jerusalem, where Zuckerman reconnected with his friend as a visiting professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1977 and 1978, Bardin had an unusual knack for getting along with his neighbors, including some of the Arabs in nearby Sur Bahir, a village located a mile away from his apartment in the upscale Arnona quarter. Yet unremarkably for a Jew living in the Holy Land at that time, Bardin was hardly eager for the city's Arab population to grow.

"I had a way of thinking about things: that they were the enemy, and you don't want them to multiply," Bardin recalled in a recent interview, pausing to remark on the casual racism that informed that attitude.

It was an attitude that was hardening around Bardin when he reported for military duty in the spring of 1988.

"When our unit arrived in Jericho for our first real taste of the intifada," Bardin recalls, "the company commander of the outgoing reserve unit taught us the ropes. He said that we would find this to be an entirely different experience from anything we had done in the army. He said that he had commanded soldiers who had supported the Peace Now movement, but after they saw what was going on, they had changed their thinking 180 degrees. He showed us that he kept a bottle with some gasoline in his jeep at all times, so that if he killed a Palestinian, he could convince the inquiry that the Palestinian had thrown a Molotov cocktail. When the Palestinians closed their stores for the daily strikes called by the intifada's leaders, he demonstrated how he destroyed the front of a poor man's shop by driving his jeep through its locked front door."

Bardin's military tour in Jericho was filled with cognitive dissonance. He watched European tourists visiting the site where John is said to have baptized Jesus, Arabs who largely modeled dignity and nonviolence by day even when Molotov cocktails lit up the night, and an occupying army whose behavior ranged from willful cruelty to noble restraint.

"It was hard to understand what was going on," Bardin writes in *A Zionist Among Palestinians*, a long-incubating memoir published in 2012 by Indiana University Press. "We were prepared to kill children throwing Molotovs, yet were casually relaxed with the population of this rebelling town. I was confused, but my actual contact with Palestinians was strangely reassuring."

The day his reserve stint ended, Bardin ventured into Jericho as a civilian to make sense of what was going on. Dressed in running shorts, he made his way on foot to the home of a released prisoner he had encountered while on guard duty in a detention facility. The man, whose hand was still bandaged where it had been struck with a billy club, invited Bardin in.

They talked. Bardin was taken aback by "the unexpected experience of meeting an Arab with moderate political views."

"From the Israeli press I had understood that the intifada was a new method for achieving the Arabs' age-old goal of throwing us into the sea," Bardin writes. "Yet Sa'ed was obviously one of the rare Arab moderates with whom we could really

make peace ... Everything he said seemed acceptable to me, unbelievably so."

Bardin warned his host not to speak so openly; if his neighbors should overhear, surely his life would be in danger. Sa'ed replied that the truth was quite the contrary. All his neighbors favored a peaceful two-state solution.

"If that's really so," Bardin said, "what if I bring a group of my friends and neighbors from Jerusalem. Would you be willing to bring some of your neighbors together so that we can hear what people are really thinking?"

The Palestinian's immediate agreement was the first in a chain of events that would take Bardin's life in a completely new—and at that time quite unusual—direction.

Bardin's memoir is a chronicle of his efforts to foster peace and mutual understanding between Jews and Palestinians from that day to this. His journey was shaped by the circumstances unique to the Holy Land during and after the First Intifada, but it illuminates a challenge that principled men and women have faced in many times and places. How can a private citizen, with no special position or influence, pursue justice and reconciliation that his community's leaders are failing to achieve?

Within a few days of his conversation with Sa'ed, Bardin returned with 10 Israeli neighbors who met with about a dozen Palestinian men and women. The latter were mostly young, but included farmers, students, and—as Bardin would discover only later, after the 1993 Oslo Accords—a high-ranking member of Yassir Arafat's Fatah Party in Jericho.

"People talked freely and openly. The lack of hostility was remarkable, considering that these people were living under our very harsh occupation," Bardin writes. "And it was remarkable for us to see how we, as Israelis, could be sitting in Palestinian homes without concern for our security."

Further meetings in Jericho led to the subsequent formation of dialogue groups in other communities, including Beit Sahour, where Bardin joined forces with a group of (mostly Christian) Palestinians organized by a Palestinian physics professor named Ghassan Andoni. A series of semi-clandestine meetings led to the parallel establishment of two official peacebuilding organizations. The Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between Peoples (PCR) was founded in the West Bank; Bardin helped to charter the Rapprochement Dialogue Center (RDC) in Israel.

Nearly 30 years later—even against the backdrop of the 2014 war in Gaza—joint Israeli-Palestinian civilian activism is commonplace (see sidebar, p. 36). But at the time, Bardin's approach was unusual enough that the Israeli Interior Ministry blocked the RDC's registration until the Association for Civil Rights in Israel took the matter to court. And even apart from bureaucratic obstacles, the social and economic barrier between Israelis and Palestinians was a high one.

"A lot of Israelis don't meet Palestinians on equal footing," says Daniel Rohrlich, one of several participants in Bardin's dialogue groups who reflected on the experience in recent phone interviews with the *Gazette*. "They meet them as subjects, or they meet them as employees, or they might meet them as bosses—though that's much less frequent. We were meeting them on level ground. I felt I was seeing things from more points of view.

"That enriched my experience of Israel greatly," he says, "because I was seeing what a lot of Israelis don't get to see."

The same was true for Palestinian families who participated, many of whom—particularly the children—had only interacted with Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers bearing arms. For Badra, who got involved in the Beit Sahour group early on, changing that dynamic was a cathartic experience.

"It was a venue for me to vent out, a venue for me to listen to the other side and hear their own stories," he remembers. "I really, really looked forward all the time to meeting with those people, especially Hillel and a few more people ... Now I have friends, people that I care about and who care about me. And that's what makes a difference. I don't think about them as enemies anymore. I care about them and I know they care about me. That's the power of this activity: the human contact, the human touch."

As the groups pivoted from dialogues to demonstrations aimed at shifting public opinion, the challenge grew more daunting. Bardin, who describes himself as a "very shy person who has trouble being forceful," emerged as what Badra calls "the backbone, at least from the Israeli side," of the endeavor. "He helped even families not involved in the dialogues, who were attacked by either soldiers or settlers. He helped them find lawyers, legal advice."

> "It's not only that you have enemies meet, but enemies sleep together in the same house under the same roof."

"Hillel was very, very active," recalls Jalal Qumsiyeh, a former teacher in Beit Sahour's Palestinian community, who is now 71. "He used to give us a lot of creative ideas, and suggest activities that were very successful. So he contributed a lot to this part of our joint work."

Since the Israeli army forbade even nonviolent demonstrations in the West Bank, and Palestinians deemed to be collaborating with Israel were punished by their own political leadership (including by execution, as the Associated Press estimated upwards of 800 were during the First Intifada), creativity was imperative. And Bardin had a particular knack for coming up with modes of public expression that the army was hard-pressed, at least temporarily, to stymie.

The avid jogger persuaded the American magazine *Runner's World* to sponsor "Runners for Peace." In Bethlehem, Aideh, and Jerusalem, Palestinian and Israeli

joggers ran side-by-side in T-shirts bearing the magazine's logo above the slogan "We Want Peace between Palestine and Israel, Each Free and Secure," printed in Hebrew, Arabic, and English in the colors of the Israeli and Palestinian flags.

One of Bardin's cleverest gambits, recounted in the most inspiring section of his memoir, was hatched after the army prevented Peace Now, a group co-founded by Israeli writer Amos Oz in 1978, from holding joint meetings with Palestinians in several villages in 1989. Working with Andoni, Badra, and others, Bardin (who by this time had evidence that his phone was tapped by Israeli authorities) organized a sleepover in Beit Sahour—cleverly timed to begin on a Friday just before sunset, the start of the Sabbath.

"The army would try to kick us out," Bardin reasoned, "but they couldn't force religious Jews to desecrate the Sabbath by riding, and Jerusalem was too far to walk. We would achieve the goal of *neutralizing* the army, not *clashing* with it."

Bardin was (and remains) committed to the army. He laments its transformation into an occupying force—"a terrible disaster for decent people in Israel"—but felt a deep duty to protect Israel from enemy states. He also had a profound appreciation for the army's role in integrating massive numbers of immigrants, from extraordinarily diverse backgrounds, into Israel's social fabric. One of the most intriguing aspects of *A Zionist Among Palestinians*—telegraphed in the book's title—is Bardin's approach to resolving the tension between his commitments to both Zionism and the Palestinians whose cause he also came to embrace.

The sleepover was a profound experience. Veronika Cohen, an observant Jew and longtime ally of Bardin's, recalls the "unbelievable sight" of Israeli parents handing their toddlers over a wall to Palestinians before climbing over, and "Palestinian teenagers rushing to help an elderly couple with their suitcases."

Barda remembers the amazement with which he watched his children play with their Jewish counterparts.

"I couldn't even tell my kids from their kids," he marvels. "That was, to me, the most wonderful activity ever."

Later he distilled a remarkable bedtime conversation he'd had with his middle son for Cohen, who wrote about it in an unpublished memoir. As he was being tucked into bed, Badra's son protested that he had been tricked.

"How come the Israelis didn't come," he asked his father. "You said they would."

"What do you mean?" Badra replied. "You played with Israeli children the whole evening."

"They were *not* Israelis."

"Sure they were!"

"Oh yeah? Then where were their guns?"

For Badra, it crystallized so much of what he hoped for from the Rapprochement groups' activities.

"It's not only that you have enemies meet, but enemies sleep together in the same house under the same roof. This is how you make people feel safe, feel secure," he says. "We shared bread, we shared food, we shared prayers—because there was a Christian priest, Muslim imam, and of course, rabbis. We all prayed on the bread together."

Perhaps even more remarkable was the manner in which the groups prayed apart. "The Palestinians had prepared a house in the neighborhood, whose owners were currently in Saudi Arabia, to serve as a synagogue for the religious Jews," Bardin writes. "After the religious Jews had finished their prayers, we all walked in the beautiful olive-filled valley, past the upper monastery of St. Saba to the Shepherds' Field where, according to tradition, the shepherds saw the star heralding the birth of Jesus."

There, Ran Cohen, a left-wing member of the Knesset who had joined the sleepover, addressed the assembly. Unlike the substantial majority of the demonstrations Bardin helped to orchestrate, this one succeeded in generating press attention. The failure of so many other efforts to garner publicity, which Bardin analyzes in his book, emerges as a poignant undertow in his

Hopscotch and Pickles: A Folklorist's Path to Peace

When Simon Lichman Gr'81 rolls his dusty Fiat along the roads of Ein Rafa, a Palestinian-Israeli village six miles west of Jerusalem, his celebrity precedes him. At every turn, small voices ring out and children mob the doors, smiling at their shaggy-haired teacher and friend.

His destination is a cheerful school whose walls are lined with bright pictures bearing Arabic script. A room of young students is eager for this week's lesson; they've come prepared with stories, games, and songs to teach one another, gathered from parents' and grandparents' childhood memories. In a few weeks they'll share these bits of family folklore in an even wider circle, joining their Jewish-Israeli counterparts to trade remnants of a rich heritage that straddles political and linguistic boundaries. That's the part the children most look forward to, and what Lichman envisioned as a PhD student 30 years ago.

Lichman, who was born in London, came to Penn in 1978 after a false start studying folklore at the University of Leeds. While Leeds' approach to the discipline centered on the collection of artifacts, Lichman wanted to investigate living culture with those who knew it well. Professors Henry Glassie Gr'69 (then-chair of the old Department of Folklore and Folklife), Kenneth S. Goldstein Gr'63, and Dan Ben-Amos propelled his studies at Penn.

Lichman was also highly influenced by a project organized by fellow student Mary Hufford Gr'89, who would later chair the Folklore and Folklife department. Hufford brought local folk artists in Camden, New Jersey, into that city's Veterans Memorial Middle School to display their arts and crafts. At the end of the three-month program, the local community came out for a festival in which Lichman found a "marvelous feeling of a community discovering itself."

Lichman wanted to apply this model in Israel, but on a more permanent basis, "so that it [would become] a part of the consciousness of the community." In 1991 he founded the Center for Creativity and Cultural Heritage (CCECH), based in Jerusalem. For some 23 years, successive cohorts of children in paired Palestinian-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli schools have met in their separate schools once a week, using family heritage as a currency for understanding.

In the first year, they focus on games: many children's games are universal, Lichman explains, but their details and methods vary based on the folkways of the children who play them. A jump-rope variation may be called "Chinese Jump Rope" or "French Skipping," depending on which culture is considered the most foreign or strange. Childhood pastimes offer much common ground; marble games were once played by Jews and Muslims in the dirt streets of Jerusalem in pre-state days. The second year is all about pickles.

memoir, as well as in the reflections of his peace-building partners.

Calling the routine indifference of the press a "frustration beyond frustration," Veronika Cohen remembers an instance at the beginning of the Second Intifada, which developed a markedly more violent character than the first, emblematized by suicide bombings.

"In Jerusalem and Tel Aviv people were afraid to get on buses," she recalls. "I called a very close friend in Nablus, and I said, 'If you could get a few hundred people to go out on the street to demonstrate against terrorizing civilians, that would make a huge difference in Israel.' She worked very hard, and she in fact organized a demonstration of many hundreds of people, who actually marched through the city of Nablus saying that killing civilians is not the way to get our freedom. And we couldn't get the press to cover it! I think Israel television actually sent a crew, and in the end what they filmed was not shown.

"To this day, I think, 'What if Israelis would have been able to see that there were hundreds of people in Nablus willing to take to the streets to say no to this terrorist activity?' And they did it! But the Israelis didn't hear about it. And as they didn't hear about it, it's as good as if it didn't happen."

It may be that by 2001, the window had just closed. Bardin's Palestinian partners had paid a price for their activism. In Beit Sahour, where the First Intifada was characterized mainly by nonviolent civil disobedience, Jalal Qumsiyeh participated in a local dairy cooperative formed to reduce the community's dependence on Israeli commodities. He was imprisoned for three months in the Negev Desert. Badra, who had participated in a civil-disobedience campaign to withhold income tax payments, was locked up as well.

"I think they arrested me not because I didn't pay taxes, but because they knew my nonviolent activities through Rapprochement," he says now. "To them, that was something more dangerous than throwing a stone or owning a gun."

Yet even as both men (and others) persisted in the dialogues and demonstrations, their message failed to influence the broader political tone. The 1994 mass murder of 29 Palestinians by the Jewish Orthodox extremist Baruch Goldstein, followed by the 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by right-wing Israeli activist Yigal Amir, undermined much of the optimism Bardin felt in the wake of the Oslo Accords. Bardin also grew frustrated with the disinclination of the Palestinian National Authority, which was formed pursuant to the Oslo Accords, to amplify—or even acknowledge—the efforts of groups like his.

"Our Palestinian friends from the West Bank told us that the new authority, whose members had returned from lengthy exile, were not used to working with Israelis, and it would take them some time to get used to the idea," he writes, referring to a still-born effort to work with them immediately after Oslo. "We are still waiting."

Accordingly, *A Zionist Among Palestinians* is ultimately a meditation on both the rewards and the limitations of civilian dialogue as a tool for social change.

"During the First Intifada, a secret, unified Palestinian leadership existed on both the national and local levels," Bardin reflects in a final chapter that examines the internal shortcomings and external circumstances that limited his activism's achievements. "With the end of the intifada, there was no longer an organization respected by the community to push people to abandon their lethargy and come together for large, demonstrative public activities which could help to achieve strategic goals. The Palestinians finally achieved their own leadership in the Palestinian Authority, but unfortunately they found that the exiled leadership returned to milk the people, to lord it over them, to introduce corruption worse than what Israel had employed in its bald-faced occupation, to deny civil liberties, and to torture their own people to death at a higher rate than Israel had done."

Lessons on the shift from nomadic lifestyles to agricultural settlements spark conversations about food preservation, which dovetails with the rich family traditions of pickling in the Middle East. Parents and grandparents are invited to a group pickling activity hosted by one school and attended by the pair of classes together.

"That's wild," says Lichman, laughing. "Usually one of these people looks at the other and says, 'You're not doing it right!' These aren't 11-year-olds, they're adults." Arguments about pickles tend to have a levity that arguments about politics do not.

The thrust is that the students are learning how history is formed and transmitted. "Children are seeing through the landscape of how their elders grew up," Lichman says, and then looking at their own world through that lens. "They're understanding that their parents and grandparents have a place in history."

The third year's topic is religion. "But it's the experience of religion," Lichman is quick to say, "the joy of religion, the charm of it." Children bring in artifacts to discuss: a prayer rug someone's grandmother brought back from Mecca, for example, or a prayer shawl passed down through generations of a Jewish family. Rabbis and imams host field trips to synagogues and mosques, and children are welcomed into each other's religious spaces—something many never imagined was possible.

It certainly has been tested. The program survived the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, as well as countless smaller flare-ups between Israel and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Students' behavior during the most difficult times is what sustains Lichman's belief in the work. During the intifada, an older student at Jerusalem's Nisui School was killed in a bus bombing during a week when students were scheduled to host their partner school, the Muslim Ein-Nequba-Ein-Rafa. Not only did both schools' students elect to go through with the meeting, but graduates of the program came out to greet the visitors.

"The message was clear," Lichman says: "'There is a separation between the people who do this violence and us.'"

This may be the ultimate takeaway of the program: that the participants see one another not as enemies in the abstract, but as acquaintances or friends. "This is the kind of experience that can't be undone," Lichman says.

During the fighting this spring and summer, Lichman adds, students from both schools asked CCECH staff for updates about how their counterparts were faring.

The program may have trouble outlasting Lichman, but this year he hopes to create a teacher-training program in partnership with local universities, so that teachers can receive school credit for practical work in the schools. He is also planning to create a graduate program of his own, for which he has already found several interested potential graduate students.

"We've got really good people who know what they're doing," Lichman says. "Let's try them. Because war isn't working."

—Violet Baron

"The mood of the book as it finally appeared is a lot more chastened than it was in the version that he was trying to get published years ago," recalls Zuckerman, who was an early reader. "A lot of water has gone over a lot of dams."

Badra wonders how things might have turned out differently if they'd had tools like Facebook and Twitter in the late 1980s, at the time of the sleepover and other activities that failed to gain press attention. "Conditions were so perfect for social media," he says. "It would have been very powerful back then, if we had tools as people have nowadays. It would have been, I think, a different story—and in a positive way."

"I think he's absolutely right," Cohen agrees. "I think it would have made a huge difference." But conditions were not fated to remain favorable indefinitely.

"These dialogues ended really in a terrible way," says Qumsiyeh. "In the Second Intifada, in 2001, a lot of the people who were involved in these activities from the Palestinian side felt that their Israeli colleagues had failed them. They were disappointed because they didn't do anything to help the Palestinians when the Israelis came and reoccupied all the Palestinian West Bank in 2001.

"We came to the conclusion that the peace camp in Israel is very weak," he continues. "And they are all the time becoming weaker and weaker. And the right in Israel is becoming stronger and stronger. And also, during the First Intifada, there was the PLO—and the PLO was ready to make peace, or to find a way to make peace. But afterwards, Hamas started to become stronger and stronger. So on both sides, peace camp is weakening, and other camp is becoming stronger."

For Bardin, it has been a hard decade. In an August 2014 essay for the *New York Review of Books*, Jonathan Freeland remarked that in the contemporary debate on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, "liberal Zionists can seem beached on a strip of land that is forever shrinking" between the hawkish Zionists and nationalists on the right and the anti-Zionists on the left. The narrowing of public discourse reflects demographic trends unprecedented in Israel's history. As *Haaretz* columnist Ari Shavit notes in his lauded 2013 memoir *My Promised Land*, some 48 percent of Israel's school-aged children are now enrolled in either ultra-Orthodox or Arab schools, and only 38 percent are secular. Bardin is an occupant of liberal Zionism's eroding shoreline. His book's cover features a photograph of Jews and Palestinians marching together beneath a trilingual banner proclaiming "We Want Peace," but its title has made booksellers in both communities reluctant to put it on their shelves.

"The truth is that things have gotten worse and worse for people like me in Israel," he said in July. "I see the way my friends talk now. Ten years ago, nobody would have said to me, 'I've got nothing more to live for in this country. I might as well pick up and leave.' And now a lot of people say that. And a lot of people, when their kids are abroad, they say, 'I really can't say to my kids that there's something to come back for.'

"This isn't the kind of Zionism that we wanted," he added.

"You know, it used to be that in America people would talk about the *silent majority*. And here also—we always pick up the American expressions. And so we talked about how the people for peace really were the silent majority, but the troublemakers were all loud, and they were expressing themselves more than we were. But I think that now we're the silent minority. And that's very troublesome. Because when you figure that, in a democracy, that the majority of the people are against you, what can you say? You're in trouble."

Zuckerman reflected on the poignancy of Bardin's memoir six weeks after the abduction and murder of three Israeli youths in the West Bank by a Palestinian clan with Hamas affiliations (who, judging from documents released by Israeli investigators, may have been acting independently of Hamas' political leadership, which nevertheless praised the killings). The day after the funeral, a Palestinian teenager was burned to death in Jerusalem in an apparent act of vengeance. Zuckerman spoke two weeks into Operation Protective Edge, at which point Israel had attacked a reported 2,800 targets in Gaza in response to some 2,000 rockets launched at Israel by Hamas.

"This is somebody with no institutional position," he said of Bardin. "This is somebody who was scrambling to create the few trifling institutions that could embody his hopes—but this is just a private citizen. And I think that the book is not just a personal memoir of that effort. I think the book is kind of an epitaph for an Israel that is no more.

"It would have been unthinkable," Zuckerman added, referring to his own time in Jerusalem in the late 1970s, before the rise of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories, "to have street scenes with thousands of Israelis chanting 'Death to the Arabs.' Things have so hardened, and there's not room for the kind of individual resistance which Hillel embodied."

The Second Intifada effectively ended the Beit Sahour dialogues, which Bardin calls "the most intense, successful, and long-lasting dialogue that I would experience." Andoni (who did not respond to interview requests) shifted his energy to the International Solidarity Movement, which he co-founded in 2001. It focused on utilizing international volunteers to nonviolently protest Israeli military operations in the West Bank and Gaza. The organization was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, and Andoni was personally nominated in 2006, but the ISM's success remains debatable. In the United States, it may be known best in connection with the death of one of its American volunteers, Rachel Corrie, who tried to block an Israel Defense Forces armored bulldozer in Gaza in 2003.

Of course the success of Bardin's dialogue groups remains debatable as well.

"On the one hand," reflects Veronika Cohen, "you could say that nothing came out of it, because we certainly didn't change the political constellation. We didn't bring peace. But on the other hand, when we started, the idea of dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis was really a novel idea—even a strange idea. And now I look around, and it's so accepted and its so widespread, that I think that maybe really we had a little something to do with seeding the idea of the need to talk to each other. And even if it didn't lead to anything in our time, maybe in the next generation it will lead to understanding."

At 78, Bardin continues to carry the flame. Not long ago he joined a group called Combatants for Peace, which was formed by former Israeli and Palestinian soldiers who have laid down arms and committed themselves to dialogue and non-violent action. His persistence, in the face of prolonged political discouragement, is perhaps explained best by his activism's deep and lasting personal rewards.

"I consider him one of my best friends," says Jalal Qumsiyeh, one of three people, along with Bardin's wife and military commander, to whom Bardin dedicated his book. "I won't ever forget that when I was released from detention camp in the desert, he was waiting for me from early morning until midnight, until I reached him at a crossroads in the desert. And he brought me back to my home in his own car.

"I can't go and visit him—for a long time now, because I can't have a permit to go and visit him in Jerusalem, which is less than 10 minutes by car. But he sometimes comes to visit me. Although he is also forbidden to come here by his own authorities in Israel—they don't like Israelis to come to the West Bank—sometimes he sneaks and comes to visit me. Just a couple of weeks ago he came to my home. He hasn't changed. He's still active, still working with Palestinians in other places."

The circle widens in other ways, as well.

In 2002, Mazen Badra, whose family had grown to include a fourth child, made the wrenching decision to leave the town where had lived all his life. His house was situated near an Israeli military post. During the violence of the Second Intifada, military crossfire riddled its walls and windows, water and electrical systems with more than 75 bullet holes. So he poured all his fortune, and all his wife's fortune, into the construction of a new house in what he thought would be a safer area. They would never spend a single night in it. Before they could move in, the sound of an explosion woke him in middle of the night in his old house. After a brief moment of confusion, during which he wondered why his wife had left all the lights on, Badra realized that both bedrooms were on fire. With a Molotov cocktail, someone had tried to burn his family alive.

"We escaped by a miracle," he says. After taking refuge elsewhere for several weeks, they left the Holy Land for good. They emigrated to Saint Louis, Missouri, where his parents and brothers had settled years before.

"We arrived in August," he remembers. "By November, I said, 'Okay, we've settled down, and it's time to continue with this.'" So he reached out to the Jewish community in Saint Louis, and started all over again.◆

The Bicycle and the Olive Trees

By Hillel Bardin

Excerpt

Jericho was my first experience with the first intifada, but it was not my first contact with Palestinians. Like most Israelis, I avoided Arab areas, and I even had a rule that whenever I would cross the Green Line (i.e., enter the areas conquered from Jordan in the 1967 "Six-Day War") I would carry my rifle. Even though I was part of the Israeli Left in that I opposed Jewish settlement in the occupied areas and favored returning the land someday in exchange for peace, I didn't know a single Arab except for two social scientists whom I knew at work.

One day in 1978 I came home to our apartment in Jerusalem's Arnona neighborhood, and found that our son Ariel's little bicycle had been stolen. Children from the neighborhood told me that they had seen two Arab kids, who made deliveries for the grocery store, taking the bike away. I went to the grocer, who said that he had fired the kids a few days before, but he gave me their names and said that they lived in the neighboring Arab village of Sur Bahir. Sur Bahir had been part of the Jordanian West Bank from 1948 until 1967, at which time we Israelis conquered it and annexed it to Jerusalem, thereby making it part of Israel. Sur Bahir was only a mile down the road from my house, but in the six years that I'd been living there I had never entered the village, nor had virtually any of my Jewish neighbors.

I considered complaining to the police, but then for some unknown reason I decided to overcome my fear of the village and try to solve the problem directly. I left my rifle at home this time, and drove into the Arab village. At a grocery store I asked where the mukhtar (the chosen leader of the village or of a clan) lived. Fortunately some of the Arabs there spoke Hebrew, and someone pointed to the home of a man who in turn directed me to Khader Dabash. I drank Arabic coffee until Khader arrived and greeted me warmly. He was a tall man, warm and self-assured. In those pre-intifada days, the mukhtar was the link between the Arab village and the Jewish Jerusalem municipality, so Khader seemed comfortable speaking with Jews.

I told the story about the bicycle, and mentioned the names of the boys who allegedly had taken it. He looked pensive. "They are not Israelis, like us," he said. "Their family is from Hebron. This family causes many problems. None of our own people would cause such problems; we have no difficulties with Jews." It struck me as interesting that he called the villagers "Israelis," for although they had been given Israeli resident status when we annexed their town, most did not have Israeli citizenship.

We talked for a while, and he promised to do all that he could. I left his home and the village lighthearted. Why had this village seemed so threatening? It seemed that there existed another very different culture just down the road from our neighborhood, and there were people living there who were neither murderers nor terrorists.

The next day, I received a call from Khader. He had located the bicycle, but it had been sold to someone in the northern part of the city. Still, he said, he would get it back for me.

A day later, I was in the street in front of our house when an old black taxi pulled up, the type of battered Mercedes that only Arabs drive. I was suspicious at first, until Khader climbed out. He opened the trunk and pulled out Ariel's bike. The bike had already been sold, but he had managed to find it and return it. I thanked him effusively, and he apologized for what had happened to us. We shook hands, and he drove away.

Seven years went by, and then one day in 1985 I looked out of our living room window and saw huge bulldozers building a road through the village's land into the valley called Wadi Zeitoun. I asked neighbors what was happening, and they said that the Jewish National Fund was planning to plant a forest on that land. I knew that the JNF sometimes plants forests to prevent Arabs from using the land, and suddenly I remembered Khader Dabash and the bicycle, and how he had been a good neighbor to me when I had a problem. I drove over to his house in the village. I wasn't sure if he would remember me. As soon as he saw me, though, he asked, "Don't tell me another bicycle has been stolen?"

"No," I replied. "I wonder whether this time it's not my people who are taking something from yours." I asked whether the planned forest was of any concern to him. He told me that this subject was all that the villagers were talking about, that the JNF action would destroy the little agricultural land that was left to them, since Israel had expropriated most of their free land to build the East Talpiyot neighborhood for Jews. I promised that I would talk to some of my neighbors to see what we could do to help.

How does one help people who have the whole weight of the government working against them? I really didn't know. I began going from house to house to get the residents to sign a petition to help our neighbors from Sur Bahir. In almost every house people would not just sign, but they wanted explanations and asked questions, many of which I couldn't adequately answer.

While gathering supporters for the petition, I also assembled a group of people who would use their experience to help us. Our first success was in getting Jerusalem's popular mayor, Teddy Kollek, to write to the minister of agriculture. He stated, "I believe that certain sections of the land from the big expropriation of 1970 could be returned to their former owners . . . [but if that is not possible, then] I request that at this stage the villagers be permitted to continue to work the land, which for some of them is their primary income and the source of their bread."

I next tried a long shot. Knesset Member Ehud Olmert of the Likud Party (who in eight years would replace Teddy as mayor, and in 2006 would become prime minister) lived in neighboring Talpiyot. His right-wing party was unlikely to support helping the Arabs, but in Israel personal contacts are frequently more important than ideology. I called him and mentioned that his daughter Michal was in the same class as my son Noam, and that we had played together on the parents' soccer team in which Ehud had scored the only two goals against the kids. Olmert came through with a lovely letter to the Jewish National Fund (which was carrying out the plantings), saying, "The planting of a forest specifically there, even if its environmental advantages are many, is liable to severely deprive the residents and to cause damage that can be avoided."

Members of the Knesset from the Left also acted on behalf of the Arab farmers.

We then had a meeting with the district head of the Israel Lands Authority (ILA), which owned the expropriated land. I was very surprised that Hassan Abu-Asala, an Arab, was allowed to participate in the meeting, and that the Jews spoke openly in front of him. The district head explained to all of us that the purpose of planting the forest was not to provide a park, but for the state to assert its ownership over the land. He told us that wherever the state is not ready to develop land, it plants cheap trees that will be uprooted at a later date when the land will be developed (he meant for Jewish use). In other words, the Arabs would lose their agricultural lands and could never assert a claim to have the lands returned.

By January 1987 we had been able to get 121 signatures on the petition. We phrased it as a letter.

To the residents of Sur Bahir:

We, residents of Arnona and Talpiyot, have heard that the Jewish National Fund is about to plant a forest on your agricultural lands that were expropriated.

Our neighborhoods have enjoyed good relations for many years. We support your right to continue to farm your lands in peace.

Most of the villagers, recognizing their lack of political strength, sought to achieve a compromise with the municipality. One family, however, who were possibly more nationalistic than the rest, insisted on challenging the expropriation and forestation in the Israeli courts. Since the Israeli courts enforce laws and policies that are designed to transfer Palestinian lands to Jewish control and use, the chance of success was extremely small. In addition, an unwritten law has generally demonstrated that Arabs who dare to challenge the Jerusalem municipality in the courts are punished and made into examples. It took almost a year for the court to reach its decision. I attended the hearing before three judges from the Supreme Court, where a learned judge stated that it was quite reasonable for the state to plant a park on the farmers' traditional lands, so that Arabs and Jews could come together for picnics and coexistence.

The moment that the decision was in, revenge was wreaked on the village. The Jewish National Fund, protected by border police, rushed in and started planting pines and cypresses wherever there was space, including in the planted wheat fields that had previously been set aside for the farmers. More than sixty young olive trees that had been planted by the villagers were uprooted by the JNF.

That night I stayed awake in bed thinking of the villagers' helplessness, and our inability to aid them. But then I remembered a discussion we'd had with a member of Kibbutz Ramat Rachel, which lies between Sur Bahir and my neighborhood of Arnona. The kibbutzniks had favored planting the forest so that the villagers could be kept at a distance from the kibbutz lands, as the kibbutz claimed that Arabs sometimes grazed sheep and goats in the fruit orchards or stole from the kibbutz. But one kibbutznik had mentioned that the Jewish National Fund was also creating a wooded strip around the kibbutz, planting olive trees

ILLUSTRATION BY EMILIANO PONZI

that members of the kibbutz could pick for themselves. The thought hit me: Why not replace the pines and cypresses with olives for the Arab farmers as well?

The next morning, I presented the idea to my Arab and Jewish colleagues, and they all accepted it. In order to sell the idea, we brought in Mayor Teddy Kollek's adviser on East Jerusalem Arabs, who was well connected with people from the JNF and the Israel Lands Authority. He immediately accepted our invitation to help, saying that it was folly to destroy the villagers' farms, and the government's course of action could only worsen relations. The mayor and the head of the JNF agreed to our compromise, on the condition that the Arabs themselves would not plant any of the olives since the trees must belong to the State of Israel. However, the head of the ILA, which legally owns expropriated land, refused to go along with us, claiming that the court had accepted the planting of the forest, and he would not go against the court.

I decided to call in more Israelis from the neighborhood to form a committee to organize the struggle for the compromise. About twenty neighbors came to the meeting. I handed out a fact sheet that I had prepared, which included the words of the Tenth Commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house ... his field ... and all that he has." I explained the history of the affair (which had also been discussed frequently in the press) and then threw the meeting open for discussion. After about an hour, one of the participants said that a meeting should never run more than an hour, and he recommended that we set up a committee to organize the struggle and then get back to us. A committee of three was approved by acclamation, whereupon everyone left. I was stunned that after all the work I had devoted to this issue, no one had thought to include me on the committee, and I suddenly realized how much one's ego is involved in what seems like pure devotion to a cause.

However, there was no need to be upset. As happens often in volunteer organizations, none of the three committee members really had the time to become involved, so after a few days of waiting I let them resign and took on the leadership again. This time, we added several key neighbors to our group. One was Dr. Veronika Cohen, the dean of students at the Rubin Academy of Music and Dance. Totally dedicated to coexistence, peace, and human rights, Veronika was an Orthodox Jewish woman who would become the leading practitioner of grassroots Jewish-Arab dialogue, and would be my colleague in many adventures with Palestinians.

We decided to organize a joint demonstration to press for the olive tree compromise. Now, joint Arab-Jewish activity of any kind was virtually unheard of in Jerusalem; this demonstration would probably be the first of its kind.

I had never been involved in organizing a demonstration. We invited Mayor Kollek to speak, so I rented a reasonable sound system. While I was very good at getting myself to work hard, I was not so good at pressing others to help me. Everyone was either working or studying, so I had to set things up by myself. But at the appointed time, at 3pm on 10 February 1987, hundreds of people began arriving and of course filling the road.

It took until 4 o'clock for Mayor Kollek to decide whether it was politically better to appear or to stay away. By police estimates, we had 700 demonstrators, half Jewish and half Arab, and the atmosphere was excellent, so he came and spoke, and my rented sound equipment worked just fine. Two deputy mayors also joined our cause. *The New York Times* quoted Yehudah Litani: "'I've never seen anything quite like this,' [he said] as he watched the crowds mix, smile, and exchange greetings. He said such an unusual mingling might happen occasionally in a rural area, but never here in the Jerusalem metropolis."

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As part of the demonstration, Khader's daughter Sana and my daughter Daphna, both ten years old, together planted an olive sapling in a bucket of soil, to symbolize our ability to cooperate even while the authorities forbade planting in the earth.

The demonstration was a great success. Jews and Arabs mingled together and chatted, as had never happened before. People who participated in the "Meeting of Neighbors" were enthusiastic, and the event was written up in the Israeli press and internationally. The demonstration's success, and JNF's concern for its own image in the face of criticism and suggestions that contributors consider other charities, led to the acceptance of our proposed compromise after three months. However, it was clear that those in power were very ambivalent about giving in to the Arabs in Wadi Zeitoun, since this change of policy impinged on the traditional Zionist strategy of transferring ownership and control of land from Arab to Jew. For example, the JNF planters grumbled as they planted the first 20 or 30 olive trees according to the agreement, and refused to pull out the pine saplings they had previously planted in the same place. Consequently, both types of trees were crowded together in unnatural proximity.

Despite the promises we had received, I remained anxious as to whether the rest of the olive trees would really be planted. But as the winter planting season approached, our committee came back to life. We suggested organizing a joint planting with Jewish and Arab children on Tu B'shvat (the Jewish Arbor Day), an idea that was attractive to the municipality, which wanted good public relations. But then the JNF changed the agreement, and decided it would spread out the olive plantings over three years, planting only at the bottom of the wadi (the valley, which the ILA didn't really care about) in the first year and determining that olives would only be

planted in those places where the pines and cypresses did not grow well. I was sure that this was a plan to keep the slopes, where Israel was considering building in the future, free of olive trees. By delaying the planting, they could diminish the public pressure. Who knew if we'd ever be able to regain our strength? (To the JNF's chagrin, its pines never took root, although the cypresses on the slope struggled along bravely.)

The First Intifada erupted in Gaza on December 8, 1987. Israelis believed that Jerusalem would not be affected by the uprising, since we did not consider the annexed East Jerusalem to be occupied territory. But within weeks, Palestinians in East Jerusalem began demonstrating in large numbers, shocking us unbelieving Israelis. Our committee's suggestion for a joint tree-planting event took on increased importance as a symbol of coexistence even as the intifada (whose full dimensions were still unfathomed by us) threatened Jewish-Arab relations in the "united" city. I remember walking around Wadi Zeitoun with Philip, the former adviser to the mayor for East Jerusalem. The morning papers had described a large stone-throwing demonstration in Jerusalem. Philip told me that his most important achievement as the mayor's adviser had been getting 45,000 Arabs to abandon Jerusalem. Otherwise, he suggested, think how many Arabs would be there to clash with our security forces! I agreed with him, thinking how lucky we were to be rid of them. It was only later that I began to think of the significance of his statement. He had worked as a municipal employee with the goal of making life so difficult for Arab residents that they would decide to leave. What kind of municipality works to discourage its residents from living in their own communities?

Returning to the problem of the JNF's refusal to plant the whole area with olive trees in the winter of 1988, I decided to confront this issue one more time. I talked with Khader, and we both signed a letter to Mayor Teddy Kollek, making the joint Arab-Jewish Arbor Day dependent on the carrying out of the original agreement to plant the whole area with olives over a single winter. I was excited by this proposal and wanted to go over it with Teddy right away. So I took the letter and waited outside his office, beginning at 5am. I was sure that Teddy would view our offer as a welcome present in these tough intifada days. When he arrived, with several assistants, I stepped up and asked if he could spare a few minutes. His aides were outraged: "How can you wait like this to ambush the mayor?" He had me sit in the reception room while he read the letter. He then consulted with his assistants, and in the end he shouted at me that he couldn't do any more than what he'd already done, and that was that.

A week later I got a written reply to my letter from the head of the Municipal Beautification Department, telling me that all I knew how to do was to shout and scream without making any contribution to understanding between Jews and Arabs. The JNF then planted a thousand tiny olive saplings in the bottom of the wadi, where the villagers liked to plant wheat. On Tu B'shvat, Jewish schoolchildren came from the Talpiyot school, guarded by border police and private guards carrying Uzi submachine guns, and planted cypress trees in the old no-man's land in front of the minefield. The Arab children did not participate in that tree planting but, influenced by the intifada, stole into the wadi and pulled up all the Jewish pine and olive trees that the JNF had planted, and left the wadi bare of trees where the Arabs' wheat and barley were growing.

Years later, the villagers converted part of the wheat fields into a soccer field, and from my window I could see the young people playing ball, with neither help nor hindrance from our municipality.

What were the lessons of Sur Bahir? First and foremost, I realized how much potential power lies in cooperative action by Arab and Jew. Interestingly, although the vast majority of my Jewish neighbors probably favored taking as much Arab land as possible, not a single voice was heard opposing our campaign (with the exception of the JNF and ILA). The press also supported us unanimously. By working within the Israeli consensus that Jerusalem is united for the good of all its residents, we silenced the opposition. Israelis want to be decent. Israelis don't want to view themselves as oppressors. While most Israelis would probably have preferred to have the JNF quietly take over the valley, nonetheless when we worked together as good neighbors—nonviolently and within the law, for the right of poor farmers to eke out their bread, and not frontally challenging Israel's right of expropriation—it was hard to fight us in the public eye. We gave Israelis a chance to feel proud of our institutions' defeat.

But there were more lessons to be learned. Conditions in Sur Bahir were nearly ideal. The neighborhoods of Talpiyot and Arnona have a very high proportion of liberal Jews from the intellectual and established elite. We have many immigrants from the West who believe in giving the underdog a chance. The area is one of the few in which many religious Jews view their Judaism as requiring moral commitment. We were fortunate to have a group of well-respected citizens who dedicated themselves to the struggle, and the village had Khader and Hassan, who led their side with wisdom and determination. And we had the good fortune to have my prior relation with Khader, which gave us the impetus to get started.

But I learned how hard it is to fight the authorities, how powerful they are. We struggled for such a long time to achieve almost nothing. Our High Court judges preferred to roll their eyes heavenward and participate in the system that legally oppresses the Palestinians. The JNF and the ILA, supported by the enormous power of the government and police, were deterred for a moment by a freakish confluence of forces, which would be hard to recreate. Today, when I look back at that struggle, I realize that the villagers were also abandoned by their own Palestinian people, whose elites did nothing to help them in their plight.

But the seed of joint Palestinian-Israeli community action was planted in my mind, and would affect my life for years to come.

Postscript, 2010: I see from my living room window that Israeli contractors are beginning to build Jewish high-rise apartment houses in the bottom of Wadi Zeitoun, east of the Green Line in East Jerusalem.◆

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