

The Uprising's Impact on Zionist Security

In our last issue we began a study of the Israeli security concept in terms of the Palestinian/ Arab threat, territory/«defensible borders.» settlements, demography, economic considerations and the integrity of the Zionist state. In this issue, we will examine the impact of the intifada on the Israeli security doctrine.

The very outbreak of the uprising was a major challenge to Israeli security. Despite 20 years of intelligence work, the Zionist intelligence services failed to anticipate such an occurrence. The army's accumulation of highly sophisticated weaponry, in the wake of the 1973 war, proved to be useless in facing the enemy in Israel's «backyard». Repression was shown to be patently ineffective in deterring the Palestinian people's readiness to struggle to regain their rights. As noted by Joel Greenberg, Rabin had often reiterated the policy of «fighting terrorism» while enabling the broader population to carry on their lives without unnecessary friction with the army, but with the uprising collective punishment became the norm (*Jerusalem Post International Edition, February 6, 1988*).

New kind of War

The Israeli press was the first to recognize that there was a war on, which could have broad implications. In an interview with *Newsweek* (February 8, 1988), *Haaretz*'s military commentator Zeev Schiff said: «We are facing serious security problems....If there was a war, we would have to keep important forces in the territories to protect the Jewish settlements, roads and military places...Our intelligence network has to be completely reorganized to take into consideration 1.4. million hostile Palestinians. And if we don't act quickly to answer to the demands of Israeli Arabs for equality of rights, the enemy will be inside the country itself. Our security conditions could thus become very precarious.» In contrast, it was not until April 1988 that Defense Minister Rabin admitted that Israel was at war. By summer 1989, when West Bank Commander Mordechai began sending in helicopters to combat the activists of the intifada on a regular basis, this had become an established fact.

In «Gaza: This is no rebellion - it is war,» (*Hair*, December 18, 1987), Makram Khury Makhul described a local leader of the uprising as follows: «...I saw him in action, giving new orders, receiving new information, leading thousands of people against the army. Twice I saw the Israeli soldiers withdrawing.» Thus began the humiliation of Israel's most prized institution. Makhul tells how a group of soldiers were caught between burning tires and demonstrators; the soldiers escaped save one. «The

captured soldier was undressed...They didn't touch him bodily and he was set free with only his torn pants on him. They could have killed him...Some of them began dancing with ammunition in one hand and with the other making the «V» sign...When I asked them what they were celebrating, they replied, «This is the greatest humiliation of the occupation». (*Race and Class*, Spring 1988). If such a thing ever happened in the course of the Arab-Israeli wars, it went unreported.

In operational terms, the intifada moved the borders of the conflict back to 1967. Telling about his experience in the Gaza Strip, an Israeli soldier said, «Twenty-two years have gone by since the Israeli army entered Gaza and took it away from the Egyptians, and the soldiers still treat the place like enemy territory which they are involved in conquering. The fact that «the enemy» is composed mostly of women, old people and children does not attenuate the feeling of danger» (*Haaretz*, July 15, 1989). David Langsam, who stayed in Qabatiya in the summer of 1989, while his nephew was serving in the Israeli army in the same area, wrote: «Curiously, the Israelis - bristling with weapons - fear the unarmed Palestinians far more than vice versa. The tension in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is much greater than 12 months ago despite (or because of) the massive IDF presence and it is clear that Israel does not occupy the territories. Israel occupies small settlements on some of the hills and for moments in time holds the roads between the settlements and the highways as convoys of workers' buses led by jeeps speed through Arab villages. The occupied territories are already Palestine and every soldier I spoke with who has served there, regardless of political affiliation, agrees (*Guardian*, September 22, 1989).

Since the early days of the uprising there have been more troops in the 1967 occupied territories than when they were conquered. That the borders have been moved is also tangibly evidenced by the increased deployment of the border guards within the territories, in addition to elite units like the Givati and Golani brigades, originally conceived as frontline infantry. This occurred after the failure of the army to quell the uprising. Reservists made up the bulk of the troops originally sent into the territories, serving up to 65 days instead of the 47-day, pre-uprising annual average; they were deemed to be easily demoralized and too sensitive to the moral issues involved in combatting civi-