

then Professor Z Breszinski) and by several similar studies prepared by the American Enterprise Institute.¹ In fact there was a time (most explicitly 1973-76) when the American Consulate in East Jerusalem was actively assessing the infra-structural needs of a forthcoming Palestinian state.

But following Begin's accession to power in 1977 and the signing of Camp David Accords, American interest in this regard has faded and it now takes forms which are less concomitant with Palestinian aspirations.

To achieve a stronger foothold in the area the United States has also resorted to its conventional policy of advancing "aid". While it was not possible to establish direct relations with an official Palestinian authority, US AID tried to achieve that through indirect means, such as voluntary agencies. It is clear therefore that the surge of American voluntary agencies in the occupied territories is not motivated merely by benevolence. More likely, VA's are perceived as important links with local Palestinian leaders, most of whom are strongly connected with the PLO.

While the political and economic limitations of voluntary agencies are common knowledge among informed West Bankers, the dominant attitude among public leaders is that they could not make matters worse under an Israeli occupation, especially in the absence of more plausible alternatives. This probably

1. Emile Nakhleh, The West Bank and Gaza - Toward the Making of a Palestinian State, (Washington D.C. : American Enterprise Institute, 1979).

explains the rapport which has evolved between VA's and divergent local political entities, ranging from pro-Jordan traditional leaders and to pro-PLO municipal councils.

f. Effectiveness of advanced aid and current prospects

The impact of aid advanced by voluntary agencies in the occupied territories is, in the researcher's experience, out of proportion to their size. Besides having able management teams, the higher efficiency of advanced funds is due mainly to the lack of alternative sources of investment which are otherwise available in countries under their own national rule. Even after the "Arab" money started pouring in, VA's continued to enjoy the distinctive advantage of being able to reach individual farmers and small beneficiaries who are virtually inaccessible to the Palestinian-Jordanian Joint Committee (PJJC) operating from Amman.

The presence of qualified technicians on their staff has enabled VA's to evaluate the feasibility of proposed projects and provide them with limited supervision during the course of their implementation. Furthermore, voluntary agencies enjoy the advantage of legitimacy by the Israeli government, in contrast to the more sticky legal status of PJJC funds. In conclusion, the researcher believes that voluntary agencies could have an important role to play in the occupied territories, at least until a national authority takes over. This, however, should be done with sufficient awareness of the salient political ramifications of their activities.