

The Link

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About This Issue

This is the story of one American playwright's willingness to question the world according to the U.S. media.

And it is the story of a Palestinian-American's search for a past that had eluded him.

Central to both stories is a village in the Upper Galilee, where horses and cows now graze.

"Sahmatah" is a one-act play for two actors. It debuted in the Pacific Northwest and Western Canada in 1996. In 1998, it was produced in Arabic in the Masrah al-Midan theater in Haifa, and on the ruins of the village of Sahmatah in the Upper Galilee.

Exceeding all expectations, the play by Hanna Eady and Ed Mast is being scheduled for more than 80 performances in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Ramallah, Gaza and other cities in Israel and Palestine.

Increasingly, the telling of the Palestinian experience is moving out of history books and into novels, plays, documentaries and films. "Scattered Like Seeds," a novel by Shaw Dallal, has just been published by Syracuse University Press. *Link* readers may remember Shaw as the author of our Jan. 1993 issue "Islam and the U.S. National Interest." We are pleased now to carry his first novel in our catalog.

His and other current books and videos are listed on pages 14 to 16. Included in the offering is the complete script of the play "Sahmatah."

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director

Sahmatah

ARTICLE BY EDWARD MAST

An old man enters, poking around on the ground with his cane, looking for something as he mumbles.

GRANDFATHER:

This was Ibrahim El Khalil's house. This was Ahmad Khalil's house. So Asad Zidan lived here. The Mukhtar's house must be in this area . . . or maybe . . . over there . . . Ah! Here it is.

A young man, Habeeb, has been sitting in the audience.

HABEEB:

What? The Mukhtar's house?

GRANDFATHER:

No. This is Abu-Adel's house. Your uncle.

HABEEB:

I always thought my uncle was from Haifa.

GRANDFATHER: (continues to search the ground)

Your uncle is from Sahmatah. He will always be from Sahmatah. So are you.

HABEEB:

I'm from Sahmatah?

GRANDFATHER:

Yes.

HABEEB:

Grandpa, I never even saw Sahmatah.

GRANDFATHER:

You're seeing it now.

HABEEB:

All I see is a hill covered with pine trees.

GRANDFATHER:

We never had pine trees. They planted pine to hide the village.

(Continued on Page 2.)

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(Continued from Page 1.)

The grandfather asks an audience member to move aside, since one of the buried homes is under that chair.

The audience giggles nervously. They think that the old man is idly puttering among old stones. The young man in the play thinks so, too. In a little under one hour, the young man and the audience will come to understand that those scattered stones are all that remain of a village called Sahmatah, where the old man was born, where he married, and where he lived until the village was destroyed in 1948.

There are some Palestinians in the audience, many of whom have hardly ever spoken aloud of their history of exile. For some of them, this performance will change that.

The play, titled "Sahmatah," was performed in Seattle and around the Pacific Northwest in 1996. In 1998, "Sahmatah" travelled to Israel/Palestine, to be performed on the actual stones of the village itself.

The project began almost four years ago.

If Your Heart Might Fall for This

In May of 1995, I got a phone message from Hanna Eady, a Palestinian-American whom I had met only once, the day before. Hanna's phone message asked if I would consider collaborating on a playwriting project, and he suggested that we "get together and talk, and you can see if your heart might fall for this."

I had recently met with the artistic directors of two Palestinian theater companies in East Jerusalem. I became aware of the obstacles

they face in presenting serious theater within their community. There are no university theater programs or other training resources in the Occupied Territories, and the Israeli government, which provides little or no support, has been known to intervene with censorship. Today's Palestinian society—urban, secular, educated, politicized by years of oppression—is ripe for theater, but Arab culture, while rich in literature, music, dance, and other arts, has no tradition of theater as we know it. I returned to the U.S. committed to finding ways for American theater artists to collaborate with Palestinians. And so I came to meet Hanna.

Hanna was planning a trip to Israel/Palestine that summer to do videotape interviews with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and Israel. His proposal was to turn this material into some kind of theater script. In my work as a playwright, I have grown cautious about committing to material I haven't seen; but still I was interested, and we agreed to meet when he returned with the interviews.

When Hanna returned to Seattle at the end of summer, his idea for the project had changed because, in that short time, he had discovered his own history. Hanna had learned about Sahmatah.

Growing Up Arab in Israel

Hanna is from the village of Buqayah in the Upper Galilee, inside Israel proper. Maps show the village as Peqiin, or Ancient Peqiin, because a Jewish settlement built on land originally part of Buqayah is called New Peqiin. The village has been inhabited for millenia. A cave was recently discovered with ceramic coffins, skeletons and artifacts that date back seven thousand years. Five different religious groups make up the small community—Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Druze, Jewish, and Muslim.

The Link Honored

Voting members of the International Writers and Artists Association (IWA) have named *The Link* as "the best newsletter of 1998." AMEU was informed of the honor by Dr. Teresinka Pereira, IWA President.

The IWA was founded in 1978 to "support the rights and freedoms in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for all people, everywhere."

Each year in December, the Association announces award winners in various categories of journalism, literature, poetry and periodicals. IWA is headquartered at Bluffton College in Bluffton, OH.

Correction

Ali Abunimah, author of "Dear NPR News," the December, 1998, issue of *The Link*, sent an E-mail to AMEU as soon as he had seen the article in print and asked if we would correct a mistake.

A sentence on page 12 noted that Steven Emerson had appeared on the CBS This Morning program on April 19, 1995. "Everything is correct," wrote Mr. Abunimah, "except the date. It should be April 20, 1995."

Hanna was raised, therefore, as a citizen of the state of Israel—unlike the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Over time, I learned from Hanna that the situation of Palestinians "inside" is both different from and similar to the situation in the Territories. In Israel's school system, for example, Arab children have little or no opportunity to study Arab culture, Arab history or the Arabic language. They are instructed in Jewish history, Hebrew, and Hebrew literature. They are expected to learn the Torah by heart, as well as many other passages from Jewish teachings. They become fluent in Hebrew. As they reach college age, many Palestinian young people speak a unique mixture of Arabic and Hebrew that their parents find difficult to understand. "We would find ourselves avoiding conversation with old people," Hanna told me, "and when it happened, it would be awkward and loud as if with a stranger who's hard of hearing."

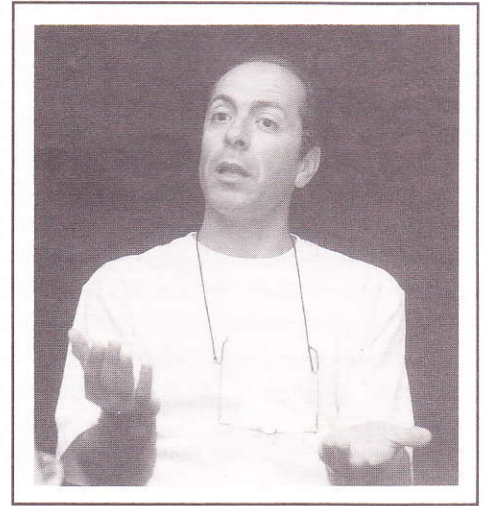
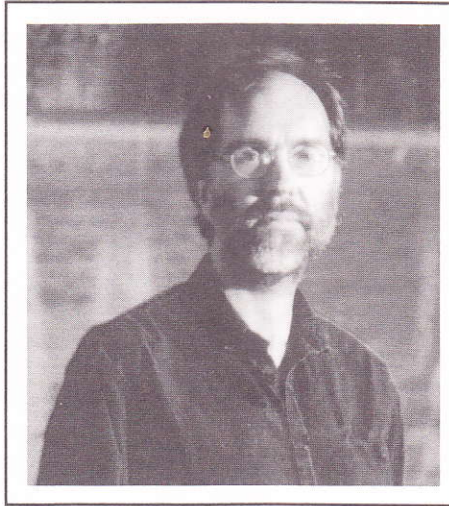
"I learned everything about the Jewish history of pain and suffering, along with one class about Arab history that was summarized in a book written by a Sephardic Jew. Arabs are portrayed as barbaric, warlike heathen out to destroy the Chosen People and throw them into the sea. There was no mention of us, the Palestinians, so I grew up thinking that we were part of the new Israeli state, a part of the new invention, and since we were new, we had no history. Since 1948 we had been forced to become workers and employees of the growing Israeli country. They gave us something we were afraid to lose: cash. We spoke Hebrew, we drove cars, and once a year we celebrated the Israeli Independence Day by singing in the streets, waving the blue and white Israeli flag."

It was only after Hanna came to the U.S. that he met Arabs who freely called themselves Palestinians. He had enrolled at the University of Wisconsin to pursue theater studies. One day, in a class discussion, he described himself as Israeli, and was taken aback when a classmate insisted that he should call himself Palestinian.

In 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon, a group of Palestinians met on the Milwaukee campus to make a list of who was going to fly back to Lebanon to join the Palestinian fighters against Israel. Hanna remembers sitting in his room, frozen: "I did not know what to say, or how to think. My name did not go on the list and I did not go to Lebanon. I stayed in Milwaukee and got very sick, very depressed, to the point of suicide. A few days later I found myself on a plane flying home."

Hanna remained in Israel most of the summer. He watched the destruction of Lebanon on TV; he listened carefully to the casualty reports for the names of Palestinians and Lebanese, particularly his university friends who had left the Milwaukee campus to join battle. But only Israeli casualties were reported. Twenty-two thousand people were killed by Israeli forces. "If I had raised my hand to put my name on that list, I could have been among them."

That summer, the border to Lebanon was opened up for the



"Sahmatah" playwrights Edward Mast (left) and Hanna Eady

first time since 1948, since it was now controlled by the Israeli army. Some relatives returned from Lebanon to visit, and Hanna met people he had known nothing about. This was the first time he realized that a large part of his family had been forced out of Palestine in 1948. It was 1982; Hanna was 25 years old.

"I returned to the U.S. with so much rage and anger. I carried these realizations like a nightmare. Where do I go now? And how can I compensate for all the past, and re-wash my brain to get the full truth, the full life? I was about to get married—to a Jewish woman. The anger prevented me from forgiving and forgetting; I was compelled instead to search for justice."

Hanna became active in dialogue groups and peace movements, and pursued a career as a director and drama teacher. His education brought him to Seattle, where he lives now with his wife and three children.

He was hopeful, as were many others, about the Oslo Accords. But like many others, he felt even more betrayal when he came to understand the true nature of the agreement. Among its many failings, the agreement made no mention of the two million refugees who are still waiting to return to the homes from which they were driven in 1948.

Hanna felt compelled to respond in some way. "I raised enough money to buy a quality video camera, and decided to take a trip back and document stories of my people, before they all disappear."

The Hilltop Where Peace Begins

"At the airport I was picked up by my neighbor, Fahid. We talked about Oslo, about the famous handshake on the White House lawn between what he called 'two war criminals.' Two hours later, we were driving by Jewish settlements in the north, Maalot, Kafar Ha-vradeem, Hosen on the right. Fahid looked up to the left and pointed to a hill covered with pine trees and said: 'Here, in Sahmatah, not on the lawn of the White House, peace starts.'"

Fahid and Hanna had grown up next door to each other in Buqayah and they were best friends. Fahid's father, Abu Soheil,

described himself as a refugee. Hanna had always been puzzled by this. How could Abu Soheil be a refugee when he lived in Buqayah? He had never gotten the answer, because he had never asked. Now he asked and now it became clear. Abu Soheil was a refugee from Sahmatah, a village only a mile away from Buqayah, on the next hilltop to the west.

Even with limited exposure to the history of the 1948 war, Hanna had heard the name of Deir Yassin, a village near Jerusalem where Israeli soldiers had massacred more than 100 civilians, half of them women and children. This event had always been discussed as an isolated and regrettable incident.

The truth that Hanna learned now was more appalling. Deir Yassin was one of 418 Palestinian villages that the Israeli army destroyed in 1948 and 1949. Many of the inhabitants of these villages were forced to leave the country, but some found refuge in neighboring towns that were spared. Today there are about 250,000 of these internal refugees, many of them living not very far from their destroyed homes. Some still carry keys to the houses from which they were suddenly and violently expelled.

Sahmatah was one of those villages. In a series of attacks beginning in late October, 1948, Israeli troops killed or drove out all of the inhabitants of Sahmatah. Some survivors fled the country, others made their way to Tarshiha, Fassuta, Haifa, or Buqayah. (Buqayah was not targeted during the war because of its large population of Christians and Druze.)

Immediately after the war, Jewish immigrants were brought in to occupy the abandoned houses of Sahmatah. Construction began nearby on a settlement called Hosen. When Hosen was completed, the immigrants moved there and Israeli army engineers blew up Sahmatah's remaining buildings. Other settlements have since been built on farmland that once belonged to Sahmatah.

The Sahmani—people of Sahmatah—were never allowed to return to their village. Abu Soheil has lived for 50 years in Buqayah, within eyesight of his village, but had never been back there in all that time.

(It should be noted that Sahmatah was outside the borders of the U.N.-designated Jewish territory. By May 1948, when the state of Israel was declared, the highly-trained and well-armed Zionist forces had completely quelled all Palestinian resistance inside the area allotted to it by the United Nations. In addition, they were attacking and conquering territory that had been

assigned by the U.N. Partition Plan to the envisioned Palestinian state, as in the case of Deir Yassin. Israel followed up with a two-pronged propaganda blitz: that they were outnumbered, and that the Palestinians were ordered to leave the country by their own Arab leaders. The armed Israeli attack on civilians in Sahmatah and the forcible expulsion of the Sahmani give the lie to both of these stories.)

Hanna was shattered, not only by what he was discovering, but also by how little of the truth he had understood. He immediately decided to focus entirely on the story of Sahmatah.

The Interviews

He began by documenting on tape the story of what happened on the first day the village was hit. In 1948, Abu Soheil was a young man in his early twenties. He's now a father of six children, all married with children of their own. The interviews consisted of a few individual sessions with him and other older people, and later with him and his children and grandchildren.

Some of the stories were being told for the first time; the whole family sat listening, especially the younger members. They listened with amazement as Abu Soheil spoke about running and hiding from Israeli soldiers, his wife carrying their newborn baby on her back.

The stories were mostly sad, but Hanna also asked about the times before the war. "I wanted a taste of the peaceful time before the creation of the state of Israel. The Grandmother told the story of their wedding, and the relationships between people in Sahmatah, especially between Muslims and Christians. They lived in harmony until 1948."

Sometimes the interviewees were aware of the camera, but when an argument got going, the camera was forgotten. There were heated discussions between husbands and wives about their children's futures. The Israeli government had offered the people of Sah-

matah government land elsewhere where they could build homes using government loans; they would pay no rent for 49 years but ownership would revert to the Israeli government after that time. Returning to rebuild in Sahmatah was not offered as an option. Yet the former occupants of Sahmatah have legal documents—in Turkish, Arabic and Hebrew—that show who owns land there and how much. Some of them, like Abu Soheil, continued to pay property taxes to Israel for years after 1948 in order to keep their claims alive.

The adult sons were against abandoning the right to build



Abu Soheil and his real life search through the ruins of Sahmatah became the basis for the character of Grandfather in the play written about the village's destruction by Israel in 1948. He is pictured standing atop the stones of the family home where he was born, baptized and married.



GRANDFATHER:

Back in 1953, when nothing else was left, we started looking for jobs. We heard they're building new settlements nearby and they need laborers. Me and my brother, your great uncle Adnan, we got permits and started working on houses for Jewish immigrants in Maalot. Every day a truck would make a few trips to deliver the stones for us to build.

One day my brother came to me with eyes on fire and his jaws locked, he could barely move his mouth.

And he said, "Do you know where they are bringing the stones from, these nice stones, all ready to be stacked without making any cuts?"

And I said, "I don't know, but this truck doesn't go far away, it must be close, huh?"

And he said, "Do you know where these stones are from!?" And I said, "What do you mean? From where?"

And he said, "From Sahmatah."

in Sahmatah and being debtors to the Israeli government. Their wives, on the other hand, were desperately looking for any immediate solution to the problem of living space. Where would their children live? In 49 years, they said, things might change; but the husbands were saying, "In 49 years you are back to square one. You have nothing, and meanwhile the government will have buried Sahmatah." Some of the kids were giggling and saying that they didn't ever want to get married. One shouted "Never! Only in Sahmatah!" (This earned him a smile and a pat on the back from his grandfather.)

Hanna wanted to hear some of the stories on site in Sahmatah. He, Fahid and Abu Soheil made plans to invite Sahmani refugees, many of whom were now dispersed in different parts of the country. They came from all over: Buqayah, Kufer-Samea, Fassutah, Haifa. Older men, mostly, but women and some children, too. They all met by the steel gate in the barbed-wire fence around Sahmatah, which is now used for cow and horse pasturing.

A Jewish settler from Tsorial nearby keeps the key to the lock, and they had arranged to meet him there. They waited a while for some who were coming from a distance, and meanwhile Hanna managed to tape the excitement and the warmth of the Sahmanis meeting each others: the kisses, the hugs, the tears and the long handshakes. An older man stared at a child, trying to figure who his father was by his features and mannerisms. "Your father must be so and so, right?" "No, that's my uncle."

When all had arrived, they walked up a dusty and very rocky road, following Abu Soheil, who was the eldest and reputed to have the sharpest memory. All Hanna could see were rocks and patches of dirt, but Abu Soheil pointed to each side of the road and rattled off a list of names: "This is Ahmad Khalil's house, this is El Haj Hashim's house . . ."

After a while, Abu Soheil realized that Hanna and the others were not seeing what he saw. He stopped in his tracks. "You must realize that we are walking on top of the village," he said, "over the roofs of the homes. The village was destroyed and buried by the Israeli army with bulldozers." He pointed into a hole in the ground and said, "Do you see the arches of a large living room? We are on top of the house."

They spent the day hearing stories of the bombing, the massacres, the torture, the fear that forced the people finally to leave the village and scatter across the Middle East.

At one point Hanna's group separated and split in several directions. Each was looking for the location of his home. Abu Soheil helped many find where their homes used to be, though somehow he could not find his own.

The day came to an end at the cemetery. The graves looked shabby, as if vandalized. Most tombstones were missing, and the above-ground grave structures had been destroyed. They sat under tall pine trees, drinking coffee and cold water. Wajeh Sumaan, the head of the Sahmatah Association, stood and recited a poem about coming home.

Hanna made one more trip to Sahmatah while he was there. Abu Soheil had not found the site of his home, so the next day he and Hanna packed cold water and drove back, this time without a key. Some of the grandchildren came along, and they all climbed through the fence. Abu Soheil poked with his cane everywhere among the ruins, examining clues. He moved so fast that Hanna lost him more than once.

They were about to give up. Hanna was idly filming the grandchildren playing, when they heard Abu Soheil shout, "I found it!" He rushed up to find Abu Soheil standing on a pile of stone, supporting himself by a twisted branch from a tree that

made its way out of the rubble. "This is our house. I was born here. I was baptized here. I got married here under this tree." He was weeping by then. "Those people, the settlers, they don't have to leave. They can stay. I just want the same thing: a chance to come back and rebuild what's left." He looked up in the direction of the settlement and called out: "Let me live just like you!"

"He talked about his childhood, described the house to me, the tree, the well, the yard, the neighbors, the church," Hanna told me later. "As we walked back toward the gate where we had left the car, he went back to naming the people who had lived on both sides of the road. At one point he started talking to them as if they were present. He could still see them standing there in front of their homes."

Creating Sahmatah

When Hanna returned to Seattle, he could hardly tell me one thing at a time, he was so overwhelmed with the whole experience. He told me about Abu Soheil poking the ground of his village for the first time in decades, recognizing the remains of a neighbor's house. Instantly I could see a play in this. We didn't know what form it might take, but I suggested at that moment that we begin the play with that old man, entering with his cane, poking the ground, asking an audience member to step aside for a moment while he inspected a particular spot.

All the videos and transcripts were in Arabic, of course, so the first necessity was to get some material into English so I could read it. We experimented with having some of it translated, but this was slow, costly and inefficient, so I encouraged Hanna simply to start writing in English—scenes if he had ideas for them, translations of the transcripts if not.

Over several weeks, as Hanna came up with more passages, we brainstormed several theatrical formats. Some of these were large scale, docu-drama style. Finally we came to a structure that reflected two stories: the destruction of a peaceful village, and the uncovering of that long-buried history by Palestinians of Hanna's generation. We developed two central characters: an old man who remembers the destruction of the village, and his grandson who has been away at college. The grandson, like many young Palestinians inside Israel proper, has been raised without any real knowledge of his history or heritage. He is anxious to forget the past and assimilate into Israeli society as much as he can—even to the extent of trying to get into the Israeli army.

HABEEB:

If I get a service record, I can get an education, I qualify for permits, I can maybe get a job good enough that I don't have to slave all my life the way my father does. Maybe I build a house for him to own and not rent all these years, and one for you next door. That's what I'd like. The war's over, Sidi. There's peace now.

This grandfather and grandson come to Sahmatah. They take a pleasant walk over a meadow of pine trees and scattered stones. But as they walk, the memory of the place rises from the ground itself, and grandfather leads his grandson through the appalling story of the destruction of Sahmatah, and of the people who once lived where nothing but Israeli-planted pine trees now grow.

From this start, I began dramatizing some of the passages Hanna had translated, reworking some of the scenes he had written, and writing the overall story of the grandfather and grandson. I heard that he had details from a wedding; I suggested and wrote a wedding scene as a final, oddly positive



GRANDFATHER:

Defend with what? Sticks and slingshots on a donkey's back? Against airplanes and tanks? Tanks. I've never seen a tank before.

But Abu Mussa said, "Why can't we all go sit in the Church and the Mosque and pray until it's over?" But Hassan El Ali said, "Didn't you hear what they did in Elabun? It was not over until the floor of the Church was a sea of blood. The priest was the first to be sacrificed."

We were afraid. People not used to being afraid were afraid.

Some said, "We have family in Buqayah," and others said, "We'll be safe in Lebanon."

But everybody said, "It's only for a few days." A few days.

memory. I delivered scenes to Hanna, who rewrote them (pointing out to me, for example, that my wedding had Muslim details but that the village would likely have had a Christian wedding). He gave them back to me, and I rewrote them again.

Slowly the play took its final form as a two-character one act. Hanna's non-profit political organization, New Image Theater, produced the play on a small scale, with Hanna directing (and teaching the American actors the tongue-splitting Arabic pronunciations). *Sahmatah* premiered in March 1996 at the Northwest Conference on the Middle East, followed by a four-week run at a small theater in Seattle.

The play was well reviewed in Seattle. ("Two characters, Habeeb and his Grandfather, peel away the layers of *Sahmatah's* history like an onion . . . It is a universal weeping that could just as easily be for the Cherokee Nation or the people of Bosnia." —Seattle Post-Intelligencer.) We were invited to perform the play in Vancouver and Portland on stages large and small, and in coffee houses and classrooms.

Hanna insisted that each performance of the play be followed by a forum, since one goal of the play was to create an environment where Palestinian-Americans would feel safe in telling their stories. He asked people he knew in the Arab community around Seattle to be, in effect, featured speakers.

At first, they responded cautiously. Palestinians in this country have grown accustomed to having their history and personal experiences responded to with silence, disbelief, and censorship. Some just want to get on with their lives instead of being identified as bitter troublemakers. Several agreed to come and watch the play, without promising to step forward afterwards.

In watching the play they were affected in ways they had not expected. Here was their hidden history enacted publicly, with an American audience watching in sympathy. It was an astonishing experience for people who had learned to be quiet out of self-preservation.

After more than one performance, audience members suddenly volunteered to come onstage with us and speak. They gave accounts of waking up in the night to the sound of loudspeakers on Zionist military trucks warning them to get out now or else; accounts of those same trucks parading through the streets with Arab heads on posts; accounts of homes in Jerusalem that their original owners are barred from visiting. The Arab community in the Northwest is not exceptionally large. Hanna knows many members quite well, yet he himself was surprised more than once to hear an old friend say "I was there in 1948."

Some months later, I suggested to Hanna: "It's a small play.

Why not translate it into Arabic, and see if you can direct it at a theater in Palestine?"

Return to Palestine

We first approached the organizers of a conference scheduled for June, 1998, in the West Bank and titled "Fifty Years of Dispossession." The organizers were enthusiastic and even though a staging didn't materialize, we had received enough encouragement to pursue the project.

Our final and successful contact came with the Arab Theater of Israel, one of the few Palestinian theaters to receive any support from the government. The Arab Theater of Israel was



HABEEB:

But you never told me about any of this. Why not?

GRANDFATHER:

If someone stole your pants, would you run down the street showing off your naked legs? If your wife were raped, would you shout it from the rooftops? Anyway, it's not like we were special. It was the same all over Palestine. Four hundred villages. Same story everywhere.

going through changes, including renaming and the hiring of a new artistic director; so our proposal was met with enthusiasm but delay. It took several months—and several lapses into despair—before the theater agreed to host a production of this little project.

First, in translating from English to Arabic, we had to decide on the form of Arabic to be used on stage. The Arabic language exists in many forms, and Arabs are accustomed to speaking a local dialect while writing and reading in Classical Arabic.

Classical Arabic, the language of the Koran, has a rich literary and oral history, and is widespread in novels, newspapers, and even many public speaking events. It has been the accepted vehicle for literature in the Arab world for centuries

and has the advantage of being understood all the way from Morocco to Iraq.

Colloquial dialects, on the other hand, vary from country to country and between regions of a single country. A Moroccan will often not comprehend a dialect from Iraq. Only in this century have any efforts been made to write in the local dialects, which can be difficult even to transcribe.

And yet, what does one use on the stage? If characters speak in Classical Arabic, it will not sound like natural human discourse. But if a local dialect is employed, the play will not be literature—and may be confusing to Arabs some distance away. For the century-long history of modern Arabic drama, this question has plagued playwrights, and various solutions have been tried, including the use of a smoother local Palestinian dialect called "BBC Colloquial."

When it came to translating "Sahmatah," I had a strong preference. The play is an immediate experience about real people, and I felt strongly that it should be written in the local dialect of the village itself. Hanna agreed instantly and eagerly. The dialect of Sahmatah is similar to that of his hometown, and he studied his audio tapes of the Sahmanis themselves. He then invented ways to transcribe the sounds phonetically. By abandoning Classical, we anticipated difficulty in persuading actors to use Arabic that might sound too plain and mundane for the stage.

We scheduled the production for August, since Hanna could bring his children with him that way. Little did we know that August of 1998 was going to be the hottest summer in Israel/Palestine in 37 years.

The theater's new name is Masrah al-Midan. *Masrah* means "theater." *Al-Midan* can mean battlefield, meeting place or forum. The new artistic director, Fouad Awad, planned to have Sahmatah as the opening show of his first three-show season, so he had big plans for our little play.

We discussed possible revisions. When we performed the play in 1996 for an American audience, the destruction of the 418 Palestinian villages would be news to many in the audience. Our play could stand on its own simply by informing. In 1998, as we considered staging venues in Israel and the Occupied Territories, the situation was different. In addition, the profusion of events for Israel's 50th anniversary caused a backlash among Palestinians, reminding the older generation of the painful facts of their dispossession, while startling the younger generation with a history they had not fully understood. Newspapers

referred frequently to the 418 villages and they became a focus of everyday conversation. Artistic Director Awad felt that the play should move beyond simply informing, that we needed to propose new ideas, new actions, new conflicts.

In addressing these ideas, we added an element to the script based on Hanna's own life. Hanna's wife, Karen, is a Jewish woman from California. They met at the University of Haifa, and their relationship caused great turmoil for both of their families. Hanna and Karen went through years of agony before convincing their families to allow the marriage. (They had three weddings: one in Israel, two in the United States.) We drew on this to suggest that the grandson in the play not only wants to join the Israeli army, but also has an Israeli fiancé. He has approached his grandfather to ask for approval.

The fiancée is never seen in the play, but this allowed us to suggest some possibilities of reconciliation. This reconciliation, however, must be based not on forgetting the past, but rather on remembering, acknowledging, and more:

HABEEB

She wasn't there fifty years ago. Her parents weren't even there. What can any of them do?

GRANDFATHER

They can stop denying it. That girl and her parents and all the rest of them: they can stop pretending it never happened. They can't bring the dead back to life, but they can admit what happened and that it should not have happened.

HABEEB

Is that all?

GRANDFATHER

Admitting it is something. And maybe someday they could do one little thing, one small speck of a thing which may or may not change anything but might still be worth the doing. One tiny thing: they could ask forgiveness.

Fouad still hankered for more conflict, more debate, maybe even more characters. We stuck to our guns, however, insisting on the integrity of the world of the play.

We realized that we were dealing with a fundamental difference between theatrical styles. Theater in Arab countries, still a relatively young art form, is heavily influenced by European theater styles of the first decades of this century, and so tends toward debate, allegory, and spectacle. The Arab style of acting, drawing on rich traditions of storytelling and oral poetry, can appear declamatory to eyes trained in naturalism. American actors are taught to look behind and beneath the simplest of



The doorway of the village church is the only structure still standing in Sahmatah. Hanna Eady and the play's cast of two are framed by its arch during rehearsal.

dialogues. Arab actors are more accustomed to shaping and delivering beautiful speeches.

Our play is a simple thing, intimate and visionary in style. When they first read our script, the Palestinian actors found it banal to the point of invisibility. They wondered if the audience would notice that they were performing at all. (This, of course, was one of the very qualities we were looking for.)

Hanna and I could only be away from the U.S. for a limited period, so we agreed that Fouad would cast the two roles in the show before we arrived. This would enable the actors to begin learning the script, and then rehearsals could begin as soon as Hanna got there. Fouad found two actors, and told Hanna over the phone that the actor who would play the grandfather "is very good. When he looks at you with his eyes wide open, he scares you." Hanna was dubious. "I wanted someone nice, not someone scary."

Rehearsals, with Hanna directing in Arabic, got underway quickly. The older actor turned out not to be scary at all, even with his eyes wide open. He is a well-known performer in Israel, very resourceful, full of emotional energy. He responded at once to Hanna's suggestions that he tone down his usual style and find the truth and depth in each moment.

The younger actor, on the other hand, was also well-trained, but is part of a younger generation of actors who are reacting against the sometimes high-flying, rhetorical emotionalism of previous Arab acting. So Hanna had the interesting challenge of reining in one actor while lighting a fire under the other.

The process was difficult, even painful at times. The grandfather carries much of the play, and at times we had to stop and allow the actor to recover from a particularly intense moment. Reliving the atrocities of Sahmatah in 1948 was not something the actor could do lightly. In one scene, a father tries and fails to save his son from execution by an Israeli soldier. In one rehearsal of this scene, the actor broke down into sobs and could not stop. Hanna had to break rehearsal and take him aside, giving him time to pull himself out of the horrible moment he had been living.

(Unfortunately, someone from the theater leaked the story to the press, and a newspaper article appeared the next day. Hanna was angry both at the invasion of privacy and at the way

this can create the wrong kind of expectation in the audience.)

I had to watch all of this in Arabic, but luckily my partner Linda was along on the trip; she had spent two years in the West Bank as a lawyer working with a human rights organization and understood enough Arabic to keep me in the picture. I had wondered if I would be able even to perceive the kind of work they were doing on the script. I needn't have worried: I was so acquainted with the dialogue that I had no difficulty understanding the various colors and qualities of the actors' performances.

When rehearsals started, neither of the actors had ever been to Sahmatah itself; they didn't even know where it was. Hanna wanted to make the landscape of the destroyed village real and concrete in the minds of the actors. He arranged for a visit, and asked some of the people from Sahmatah to show them around. They met there on a Sunday. The actor playing a grandfather from Sahmatah met the grandfather from Sahmatah on whom

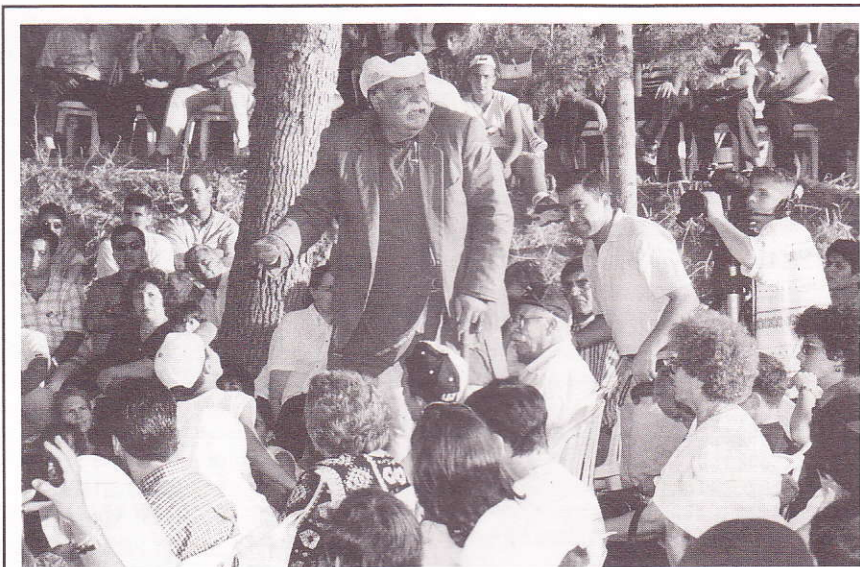
his part was based. The company was shown around the site of the village, and they rehearsed a few scenes there. By the end of the day, every story, every pause, every word was so real, Hanna wondered if any script could possibly do justice to these events.

The actors were listening and recording everything the Sahmanis said on audiocassette. They went away and studied that particular dialect of Sahmatah, earnestly joining the effort to use the colloquial onstage. The actors frequently commented how amazed they were at discovering the subtext of the words. The tightness of the text, say-

ing more with fewer words, was almost shocking to them. They were very open to the use of improvisation, such as creating unwritten scenes or moments as exercises to help understand a character's motivations.

Since Hanna had not done theater work in Israel/Palestine in 17 years, he and I both had to get used to the local approach to rehearsal etiquette and punctuality. Since regular telephone lines are difficult and expensive to acquire, almost everyone in Israel carries a cell phone. They call them "bellyphones," from the Hebrew *palla*, meaning "miracle." It was not uncommon for an actor to walk offstage during rehearsal to answer a phone call.

Furthermore, we rehearsed eight hours a day, six days a week, without knowing where or when the play would open.



First performed in English in Seattle, "Sahmatah" was taken home for staging in Arabic on the broken stones of the village that was eradicated 50 years before. Here Loutuf Nuwayer ("Grandfather") and his audience share the stage during the performance there.

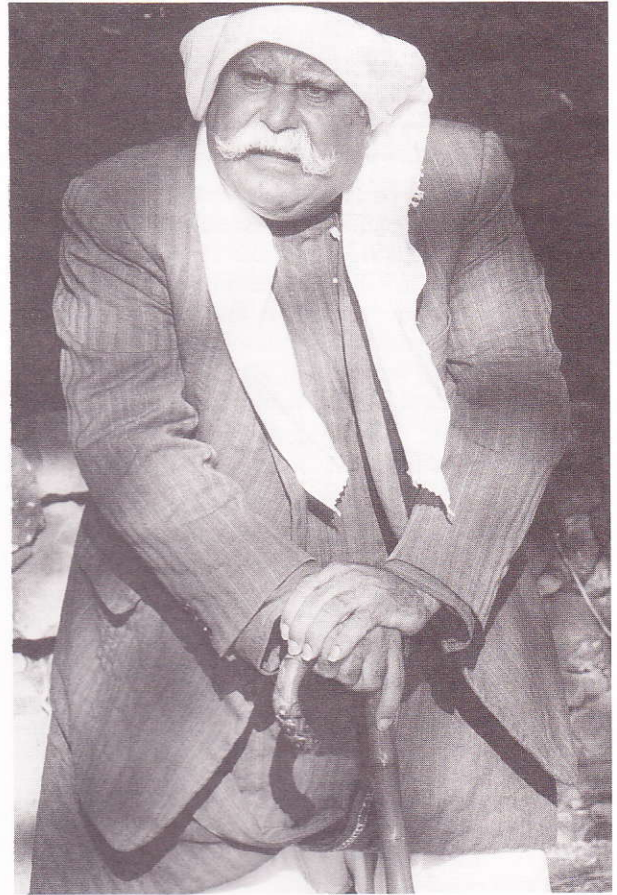
*It was harvest. They were gathering wheat.
Grinding it and baking it right there on the bayder.
Smell of fresh bread, all over the mountains.*

*A little boy—Anwar was his name—saw it first.
A cloud of dust down by Sahmatah's south road.*

*The boy was scared.
He said I hope it doesn't reach us.
His father said It's just the wind.
But the boy heard a sound.
A crying sound, he thought.*

*And his father said It's just the wind.
But his father thought to himself
Please God, take that dust
away from my family's eyes,
turn this evil wind back where it came from!
And he said Come on son, we have work to do.*

*But they couldn't, because the cloud came closer.
And it wasn't the wind or any wild horses.
It was just a long line of people.
Men and women and children
carrying possessions on their backs.*



Masrah al-Midan does not have its own staging space. Since Palestinians are not accustomed to attending theater, instead the theater goes to them. Shows tour the country, with dates and locations announced only slightly in advance of performances. The project was news. Every day we saw articles and photos in Arabic newspapers, yet none of them told when the shows would be staged or how to find out. They were considering opening at a theater in Haifa or Nazareth, or perhaps in the small theater space in Shafa'amer in the Upper Galilee where we were rehearsing (and where we ultimately would have an invitational preview). Hanna and I were scheduled to leave on August 21, so we hoped they would open before then.

From the very beginning, Hanna had dreamed of performing the play on the site of the village itself, to give something back, some recognition, some gift, to the people of Sahmatah. Ultimately that dream came to be: it was decided that the play would open on Friday night, August 21, in Sahmatah. The people of the village would secure a permit for the performance to be held there.

We continued making revisions in the script, learning small and large aspects of local sensibilities, trying to make the play more honest and reflective of the people there. And we kept dealing with the record 108 degree heat, which made our air-conditioned rehearsal hall a popular place to spend time. Re-


hearsals lasted three weeks. We performed a preview for a small invited audience, and then prepared to perform at Sahmatah.

At Sahmatah

To my eyes, Sahmatah is a wooded hill with ruins that look ancient, hundreds of years old—brown mud bricks, the arch of a doorway; irregular paving stones. Had Crusaders been here? Romans? I had to remind myself that 50 years ago, some of Hanna's neighbors lived there, and some of them still have keys to the doors that filled those ruined doorways.

We didn't know it at the time, but the survivors from Sahmatah and their children were negotiating a tangled legal web for several weeks trying to get a permit from the Israeli government to have a public event at the site. A week before we scheduled the opening, they told us they had gotten permission. In fact, the permit was granted only two days before we opened. An unusual optimism had carried them through.

For weeks beforehand, members of that community had been visiting the site, clearing brush and stumps and jagged stones away from the spot where we would perform. Of course they were enthusiastic about the performance, but this also was their first chance in 50 years to invite people to their village. It

was a homecoming party as much as a theater event. 

While there seemed to be daily mention of the show in Arab newspapers, I continued to be unsettled because there was no mention of exactly how to contact the theater. Hanna was becoming acclimated and assured me that this was the usual style: the word would go out at the last minute, and everyone in the nearby villages would know. I couldn't help wondering if our cast of two might outnumber the audience.

In blistering, oppressive heat, we walked up the narrow path to the Sahmatah hilltop several times in the week beforehand to pace out how the show would adapt to the outdoor space. The clearing was surrounded by fig, almond and olive trees. Visible in the background was the arch of the church door, the only structure still standing.

The audience would face inward, toward what had been the center of the village. Behind them, the hilltop sloped down and gave a clear view of Maalot, an Israeli settlement on a hill across the valley. In the script, the characters refer to Hosen, a settlement in a slightly different direction, but we quickly decided to change the dialogue and aim those comments at the settlement that is so highly visible.

The play brings actors and audience into intimate contact, so I shuddered to think how the performance would creak under the weight of microphones and a restless outdoor crowd. We tested the body-mikes the day before opening. To my surprise they sounded fine. Performance was scheduled at 6, so in Arab time we imagined we'd start between 6:30 and 7. This meant the sun would be low, behind the audience but illuminating the actors by shining right in their eyes. "Good," they said. "Perfect."

The afternoon of the performance was plenty hot, though not record-breaking as many previous days had been. The crew had been on site all day and the actors met in the morning for a light rehearsal. By the time Hanna and I arrived at 5:30, the winding dirt road that led up the hill was lined with parked cars. Word had indeed gone out. And it had become something of a media event; several video crews were setting up, and reporters from large and small journals kept approaching Hanna and myself with microphones and tape recorders. Students from a playwriting workshop I had been giving for three weeks were there, including some who had come to the preview two nights before. Several sympathetic Israelis were in attendance as well. There were blankets for sitting on the ground, and behind them several rows of those white plastic garden chairs that I saw everywhere I went.

As time for the performance approached, I observed the more elderly of the attendees occupying the front rows. They were identified to me as refugees from Sahmatah. The head of the Sahmatah Association rose and welcomed the audience, which numbered over 200, many standing behind and around the performance area.

There was no stage lighting to go up or down. There was simply quiet and the sound of a light breeze. The actor playing the grandfather scabbled his way through the brush, poking at the ground with his cane.

This was Ibrahim El Khalil's house.

This was Ahmad Khalil's house. So Asad Zidan lived here.

The Church is over in that direction, and this was El Haj Hashim's house, and here was his son's house next to it. And his brother, over here. The Mukhtar's house must be in this area. Ah! Here it is. Excuse me . . .

I stood behind an older man who smiled and nodded, recognizing some of the names. When the actor playing the grandson entered through the audience—having run up the mountainside looking for his grandfather—some looked askance, wondering if he was a troublemaker disrupting the show.

It was not an ideal performance. The microphones, which had worked perfectly the day before, now began to go on and off when the grandfather moved in his elaborate robed costume. The video cameramen, apparently used to filming sports events, squatted, knelt and lurched about the stage right next to the performers, dragging their long cables with them, until Hanna threatened to throw rocks at them if they didn't stop. The edges of the stage were vague, and a couple of children chose to move over and sit on a log that was part of our staging pattern.

But the actors stepped over the children, or sat next to them and talked across them. The audience giggled at the story of an old man trying to harvest a special olive out of a too-tall olive tree, and was silent when the olive harvest became the first target of an aerial assault in the vicinity. The play-goers were within arm's reach when the young man stood with eyes closed and felt the memories of disaster surge up from the ground through his feet, into his whole body. There were tears and averted eyes when the two actors became a father watching his son murdered by an Israeli soldier. Near the end, the young man—awake now to the truth of what had happened to his village before he was born—asked his grandfather,

What do you want them to do? They can't undo the past. Do you want them all to leave? All pack up and leave their country?

the grandfather replied:

No. No. I don't want them to leave. There's room for all of us.

and he stepped away from the stage, into the audience, up onto a chair, and called out across the valley to the Israeli settlement still visible in the late sun:

There's room for all of us! Don't go! Don't go! Stay here and live with us. But LET US LIVE HERE! LET US LIVE HERE! LET US LIVE HERE!

On a stage, in a theater, this moment is not always the high point of the play. In Sahmatah, it became the reason for doing the play at all.

Afterwards, there were speeches, flowers, and even embossed brass plates for Hanna and me. Hanna spoke to the audience in Arabic, but after a few words he broke down briefly in tears. What he was saying, I later learned, was quite simple: "For making this happen, I want to thank all the people of Sahmatah, all our neighbors. . . ." And for him, at that moment, the word "neighbors" was simply too full: of people he had grown up knowing and not knowing, of people who had lived in exile, with silent memories, whose history was awake now at last, and who were, for the first time in 50 years, performing the simple, common, life-sustaining act of welcoming guests to their home. □

Reviews from Arab Papers

- ◆ "Sahmatah is a work of art that speaks of the harsh and painful truth If we forget the truth, what's alive in us will die as well; we will lose our deep existence in time . . . I am Sahmatah, and forgive me if I say: Sahmatah . . . is all of us."—Nabil Azar in *El Maqal*.
- ◆ "The audience that watched the play in Sahmatah came out in love with the theater: the actors, the writers, the director, and stage hands. The challenge of the theater now is not just to repeat but to renew it."—Salman Natur in *Al Ettihad*
- ◆ "... The Stage: the yard in front of Sahmatah's old church and Mosque. The Set: The shade of an old resilient fig tree, remains of a destroyed home, and a pile of stones.

The Lighting: shafts of light from a sunset coming through the branches. And, The Music: The heart beats and the 'Aaaahaaaf' [sounds of agony and pain]."—Tariq Qubti and Jakie Khori in *Al Sunarah*

- ◆ "In addition to the artistic beauty of the play, it addresses the unresolved refugees issue—which is in the heart of the political arena—with a clear and loud voice and pure calls to justice."—Bashir Shulush in *El Maqal*
- ◆ "... The whole family arrives to see *Sahmatah*: the girls and the women, the children and young men. . . all come to witness this public event in the market in Nazareth. The place is packed. Some of the children find seats on the logs used as set pieces for the play. All with wide ears listening to scenes from a play that touched all of our hearts, watching it

and watching our children watching it too. A play with deep meaning. An audience member said after the play: 'What we have witnessed is a show of warmth that can't be matched. We've needed it all the time, continuously.'"—Amal Shihadeh in *El Maqal*

For More Information

Plans are underway for a video documentary on the Sahmatah process, and for future collaborations between Palestinian and American theaters. For information on:

- The play and related plans. Tele. (206) 842-7630, or e-mail Hartichoke@compuserve.com
- The Palestine Information Project's exhibit material. Tele. (206) 633-1086.
- Performances in Israel/Palestine by Al-Midan Theater in Haifa. Tele. 011-972-4-864-1871 (from the U.S.) or 04-864-1871 (in Israel/Palestine).

Starting from Zero

I came slowly to the truth about Palestine. Like most Americans, I grew up squarely behind vulnerable little Israel, surrounded by huge hulking Arab states and riddled with internal terrorists. As a junior high student, I cheered the brilliant victory of the Six Day War, and many of the early racist jokes I laughed at were about Egyptian soldiers and tanks. I had no sense of Palestine as a place. I think I believed that the name "Palestine" was loosely applied to the general region from which Israel was carved after WWII, and that Palestinians were some people unreasonably upset that Jews were now in charge. Like all Americans, I regretted the increasing violence with which the Israelis were treating their Arab dissidents, but they still held my sympathy because I believed they were tragically caught between morality and survival. The Middle East was, to me, a tangle of ancient ethnic and religious grudges, and my responsibility ended there.

Only in my late thirties did I have occasion to befriend some Jordanian and Palestinian-Americans. Through the simple fact of friendship, I began to experience some incidents through their eyes: for ex-

ample, the refusal of most media to refer to settler Baruch Goldstein's massacre in Hebron of dozens of Muslims—shot in the back while they were praying—as anything but an "incident."

Finally, when I was past 40, the nudging of my friends drew me to a couple of books and, with amazingly little actual research, I learned several simple facts. Palestine was a place. Palestinians have lived there for 5,000 years. All the supposed muddle and tangle of the Middle East is not about religion or ancient grudges, but because Palestinians were conquered and dispossessed by a European Zionist movement, a movement which began long before the Holocaust. And this injustice, as well as all the injustices which have grown out of it, has been supported, not by all the countries of the world, but mainly and most importantly by the United States, my own country.

I was overcome by that all-too-common outrage: the anger of one who has been systematically barred from the truth. Having been raised to be skeptical of government policy, having traveled to the Soviet Union and Nicaragua in efforts to counteract American imperial policies, I was astonished to learn how thoroughly

I had been taken in. I began immediately to consider writing about the issue and joined an Earthstewards-Peacetreets group on a trip to the West Bank in 1995.

I stayed in the Palestinian village of Bourin, near Nablus, in the Occupied Territories. The green hillsides reminded me of Sonoma Valley in California where I grew up. I planted trees and worked alongside people whose ability to trust has been battered beyond measure, whose lives are one long struggle against exile, injustice, and extermination. I watched those people respond to this threat in the simplest and most enduring of ways: by making olive oil from trees their grandparents planted, and welcoming guests into their homes, and teaching their children to read, and planting olive and fruit trees for their children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

My trip was in the wake of the Oslo agreement of September, 1993. At the time of the agreement, most Americans like myself had applauded the spectacle of Yasser Arafat and Yitzak Rabin shaking hands on the White House lawn. We assumed it meant some progress toward real peace. Only on careful inspection was that agree-

(Continued on page 13)

Spreading the Word In America

were doing and smiled, saying "Wow! Are you allowed to talk about this in a library?" He offered congratulations.

Since my 1995 trip to Israel/Palestine, I have been involved with several organizations attempting to spread the truth about the situation there, through demonstrations, vigils, public meetings, conferences, and any other means available.

One group which I co-founded is the Palestine Information Project (PIP), devoted to developing texts and visual aids for group presentations.

One of PIP's more successful projects was an exhibit to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Six Day War in 1967. The exhibit was titled "Palestinian Stories: 30 Years of Military Occupation in the West Bank and Gaza." It included panels on Oslo, the Occupied Territories, and an hour-by-hour timeline of the war itself, demonstrating how Israel invited the conflict, launched an aggressive war, and refused offers of peace and even surrender until its territorial objectives had been conquered.

We approached several community centers with the exhibit. To our surprise we were invited to put it up in the main lobby of the Seattle Public Library's central downtown branch. We were so taken aback by this good luck that we doublechecked, asking, in effect: "Are you sure you know what we're proposing?" The librarians in charge of Continuing Education assured us that they understood, and that they were committed to free speech and the presentation of difficult and controversial issues. "That's what libraries are for," they said.

We leaped at this unusual opportunity and prepared 14 panels of pictures and information. Our exhibit received many compliments for its appealing and professional format. Palestinians who saw it were astonished and moved: they were unaccustomed to seeing their story in so public a location. Controversy, however, began even as we were installing the exhibit. One man saw what we

Shortly thereafter, a man came up to us, frowning, and asked essentially the same question: "Does the library know you're putting this up here?" He was concerned that a presentation so full of what he called "one-sided rhetoric" would be accepted in this public institution. We suggested that the facts were not one-sided. This gentleman was pretty reasonable, actually: he went on to point out one factual error which we later corrected.

Other complaints were not so reasonable. Our exhibit became the most controversial in the history of the Seattle Public Library. Librarians at the nearby Humanities Desk, all of who supported our exhibit, were submitted to a stream of complaints. One of the librarians has a German accent, and she had to ask one complainant to stop calling her a Nazi. Accusations of anti-Jewishness came from outside and even from some library staff.

We had made sure to have a phone number available so that complainers could contact our organization directly. The librarians gave out the number freely, but not one complaint reached our telephone. All who objected to the exhibit chose to attack the librarians, who were in the middle, rather than the developers of the exhibit.

A consistent theme in complaints was the lack of so-called "balance." Israel has been so successful in presenting the Palestinian problem as an ancient grudge between two ethnicities that by now any attempt to show the truth about Palestinians is regarded as unreasonable favoritism. The situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories closely resembles that of the black majority in old South Africa, but an exhibit about apartheid would be unlikely to stimulate complaints that the white Afrikaaner minority was not being given a fair shake.

Humane people all over the world abhor anti-Semitism in all its forms. The state of Israel, however, has consistently exploited these feelings—as well as our legitimate horror toward the Jewish Holocaust—to justify its policies of oppression, racism, and military dictatorship. A great many Jews are appalled at this exploitation, and refuse to be associated with a state that is built on such racist foundations.

The librarians stood up bravely under the barrage of criticism and abuse, some of it very personal. They continued to thank us for bringing the exhibit, and were not cowed by facile arguments about "balance."

The library administration was not so blithe. They did not ask us to remove the exhibit—which was only up for the six days of the anniversary in any case—but they did take actions to avoid controversy of this intensity in the future.

A few months later, we began to plan an exhibit for the following year to be titled "Fifty Years of Dispossession." We incorporated in our proposal some of the librarians' suggestions from the recent experience—holding several public forums in tandem with the exhibit, for example, so that complaints and dissent could be openly discussed.

We approached the same contacts at the Seattle Public Library with our proposal. After taking some time to consider it, they responded by letter: the proposed exhibit would not fit in with the "newly-revised guidelines for exhibits." Pointedly, the new guidelines called for a "balanced presentation" of any controversial issue. The library administration suggested that we collaborate with the Jewish Federation or some other pro-Israeli group to develop an exhibit that showed "both sides of the issue."

Shortly thereafter, we had the same experience with a local King County library branch, which accepted one of our exhibits but then responded to the unprecedented controversy by revising their guidelines to include statements about "balance."

Balance is a good thing, as is peace. However, when "balance" comes to mean that no oppressed can have voice without equal space for an already-louder oppressor, then words as well as people are being tortured.

(Continued from page 12)

learned about waging peace. But in Palestine, the word "peace" was being coopted to mean surrender, to mean the maintaining of current power relationships. In Palestine, I learned that to wage peace, one must first wage justice. The issues were under my skin, and I came back home confident that I would return to Palestine before too long. □

Growing up in the Cold War, I had

learned about waging peace. But in Palestine, the word "peace" was being coopted to mean surrender, to mean the maintaining of current power relationships. In Palestine, I learned that to wage peace, one must first wage justice. The issues were under my skin, and I came back home confident that I would return to Palestine before too long. □

Photos

Four photos from performances of "Sahmatah" were selected to highlight dialogue from the play. The venues are: Page 5—Nazareth; 6—Seattle; 7, 10—Sahmatah.

In Seattle, the actors are Christopher Balestri (Grandfather) and Christopher Petit (Habeeb). In Nazareth and Sahmatah, they are Loutuf Nuwayer (Grandfather) and Mysera Massri (Habeeb).



The Arab World

Seven monographs prepared by the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding. Includes: "Introduction to the Arab World;" "The Maghreb;" "Egypt;" "Israel and Palestine;" "Jordan;" and "The Arabian Peninsula."

Comes in an attractive, laminated folder with fine illustrations. Ideal for elementary and high school teachers.

List: \$20; AMEU: \$19.50



Remembering Deir Yassin: The Future of Israel and Palestine, D. McGowan, M. Ellis, eds. 1998, 150 pp., paper.

When the day comes to build a memorial at Deir Yassin to mark the Palestinian Catastrophe, chances are it will be built through the efforts of Dan McGowan (see his *Link* article of Sept. 1996), Mark Ellis (*Link*, April 1991), and the members of their Deir Yassin Foundation. This book is part of their research.

List: \$15; AMEU: \$13.50



Babylon to Baku by Zayn Bilkadi, 224 pp., 12" x 9 1/4", hardcover.

Oil is basic not only to our economy but to economies going back 40,000 years. A delightful — and surprising — art book story told with 260 full color plate illustrations, many of art and artifacts in the British Museum. Comes in casebound linen cover with laminated gold finish dust-jacket.

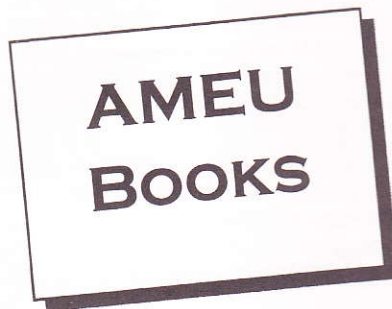
List: \$75; AMEU: \$59.00



Arafat by Said Aburish, 1998, 360 pp., hardcover.

Well researched bibliography of the Palestinian leader. Includes his contacts since 1973 with the CIA, and his many secret approaches to Israel. Author, born in Palestine, is former correspondent for Radio Free Europe and The Daily Mail.

List: \$25.95; AMEU: \$20.50



See more books (and order form) on Page 15 and video selections on Page 16.



Scattered Like Seeds by Shaw Dalal, 1999, 192 pp., cloth.

An historical novel about a Palestinian, whose exile from Palestine brings him to the U.S., where his learning in law and nuclear technology returns him to the Middle East. Author is former legal counsel to the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries.

List: \$26.95; AMEU: \$24.95



Bethlehem 2000: Past and Present by Mitri Raheb and Fred Strickert, 1998, 11 3/4 x 9 1/4, 160 pp., cloth.

History of the culture, religion and presentday reality of one of the decisive locales in recorded history. As the millennium draws near, this splendid work with its 130 color photos will put all the hoopla in historical perspective.

List: \$34.95; AMEU: \$ 32.50



The Children Are Dying: The Impact of Sanctions on Iraq, 1998, 167 pp., paper.

Reports by U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, British P.M. Tony Benn, Simon Harak, S.J., and journalist Barbara Aziz. Also includes a good list of resources.

List: \$12.95; AMEU \$11.50

Palestine 1948

50 Years After Nakba

The Towns and Villages Depopulated by the Zionist Invasion of 1948
Prepared by Salman Abu-Sitta.
Based on works by B. Morris, W. Khalidi, B. Nijim, B. Muammer, et al.

39" x 21 1/2" Wall Map of 1948 Palestine
Shows locations of:
● 531 depopulated towns & villages and gives reasons inhabitants left.
● 33 villages/towns terrorized by Zionist massacres.
● Places worldwide where Palestinians live today.

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The Spirit of Palestine. 10½" x 12½", 244 pp., 1994, hardcover, 156 illustrations, mostly full-color plates. Many rare archival photos.

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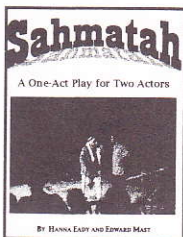
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