

Israeli history skips 30 centuries

Arabs in Palestine denied jobs, heritage

Khaled Mouammar is a spokesman for the Arab-Palestine Association. He was born in Nazareth and left Palestine in 1948.

Excalibur interviewed Mouammar last week, in an effort to bring to light the Palestinian side of the complex Middle East situation.

By MICHAEL HOLLETT and PAUL STUART

The interview began with a discussion of charges of anti-Arab racism in Israel. Mouammar painted a bleak picture of life for Israeli Arabs.

"The Israelis are not as blunt about discrimination as the South Africans are about apartheid. They don't say that Arabs are second-class citizens officially, but that is how it is in practice.

"Members of my wife's family were among the people who stayed behind in occupied Palestine and tried to build a life for themselves. But they found it was impossible; her relatives couldn't operate a business in Haifa with Arab names."

Mouammar claimed that the Arabs remaining in Israeli territory are victims of total social, economic and cultural repression.

"Within Israel, Arabs constitute 12 per cent of the population, but make up only two per cent of university students. One reason for this is that most of them drop out of high school very early, because the Israeli high schools teach only what they call 'Israeli history'.

SKIP CENTURIES

"They skip 3,000 years of history, they bypass the Arabs completely. They say 'There was Israel, then the Romans came, then they resume with a history of Zionism.

"If an Arab stays in school, his cultural identity will be destroyed. They attempt to make him ashamed of his heritage.

"What's more, even if he graduates, 50 per cent of the jobs are blocked to Arabs because the Israelis claim they are defence related, and that Arabs would be a security threat.

"The sciences and medical professions are taboo to Arabs for the same reason."

He described the Toronto-based organization of which he is a member.

"The Arab Palestine Association was formed in 1966. After the '67 war, when the Palestinian struggle became well known, we devoted ourselves to supporting the resistance and its goals.

"There are 2,000 Palestinians in Toronto, 1,000 of them for occupied Palestine. Because many of them hold Israeli citizenship, they are afraid of reprisals that might be made against them by the Israeli government and in some cases, of a possible threat to the safety of their relatives in Palestine if they become involved in politics here.

INTERROGATED

"One refugee who lives here gave \$20 to the Palestinian Red Crescent (Red Cross), through us, in early 1973. In the summer he returned to Palestine to visit relatives in Nazareth. He was detained for a week and questioned by the Israeli authorities."

Mouammar presented a version of recent Mid-East history that contradicts the prevailing popular conception.

When asked to comment on the charge that the Palestinians left their homes in 1948 to make way for an onslaught of Arab armies bent on genocide, Mouammar said, "Yes, we've heard that hundreds of times. It's just not true, and if you look at it reasonably, the whole idea makes no sense.

"To begin with, a reporter, Michael Adams, monitored BBC tapes of Arab radio broadcasts from



Khaled Mouammar of the Arab-Palestinian Association

1947 to 1948, and didn't find a single broadcast urging Arabs to leave Palestine.

NO SENSE

"Think about it. If you were an Arab general, would you want a million hungry and homeless refugees clogging the roads and slowing down your army? Also, it would have made sense from a military point of view to have had a sympathetic population that could have helped the armies.

"In my own case, my family took me out on the back of a mule. I can still remember how sore I was

afterwards. But we had to sneak into Lebanon; if the Arabs wanted us, why did we have to come in secretly?"

"When Palestine was partitioned (in 1948), the Israelis were to receive 54 per cent of the territory, and we were to get the remainder, though we outnumbered the Jews.

"But the Zionists began infiltrating the Arab territory, and tried to claim the territory as their own. This action took place before May 15, when the partition was to take effect. The Arab armies did not move until after this date.

FRIGHTENING

"The presence of the Zionist forces was frightening to our people. The Zionists were well-armed and had military experience fighting with the British in World War Two, whereas our people had been forbidden to carry arms.

"Then there was the massacre at Deir Yassin, in which 254 people

Ulster death toll below U.S. rates

CHICAGO (CUP/ENS) — Everyone knows Northern Ireland is a dangerous place to be.

World attention has focused continually on the reports of bombings and murders originating in that military-occupied country. But according to latest FBI statistics, each of America's 10 largest cities is a worse place to be.

Homicide rates in these cities are much higher than in North Ireland. In fact, although Detroit and Ulster have about the same population, homicides in Detroit during 1973 alone totalled more than all of Ulster's in the past five and a half years of martial law.

Muzak visits the plant kingdom

INDIANAPOLIS (CUP/ENS) — Wondering if your house plants have been getting lonely all those weekdays when you leave them alone?

Your worries are over: a new album from the Funny Forum of Indianapolis is designed "for people who don't have time to entertain their lonely plants..."

Entitled *Vegetation Conversation: Music and Thoughts for Things in Pots*, the album features songs such as *Lament to a Plant* and *No Matter How Fertile, There's No Place Like Loam*.

The liner notes claim that the musical numbers and poetry "provide the plant with the audio attention and musical manure to accelerate its well-being in the owner's absence".

A.I.I. members receive prank calls after Toronto office fire-bombed

On the night of December 13, 1974, the Toronto office of the Arab Immigrant Information and Community Services, located on the second floor of the First Unitarian Church on St. Clair Avenue, was firebombed.

A representative of the organization, who wished to remain anonymous, said that immediately after the bombing, neighbours saw two people fleeing the building.

"It is only because the neighbours reported the fire promptly that the entire church did not burn up," he said.

"We lost at least 1,000 books and

many files in the fire. Our most important office was destroyed, and damage was done to other offices in the area.

"The damage has been estimated at approximately \$10,000, and our insurance doesn't cover that amount."

He said the bombers appeared to have known what to look for, since they broke into the files and stole the organization's membership lists.

"Since the attack some people on our lists have been getting prank phone calls," said the spokesman. "They (the bombers) have our letterhead and our seal, so they could send things out in our name.

We have warned members of the community of this possibility."

The spokesman emphasized that the AII is a non-political organization supported by the federal, provincial and municipal governments, and therefore is surprised by the attack. He added, however, that the organization has in the past been the victim of pranks and threats; in fact, in the course of a discussion with Excalibur, he received another of what he termed the "endless" prank phone calls the office gets.

He speculated that the reason the office is subject to abuse is because the organization is the only one in the city whose identity is purely Arab.

"We are the only listing in the phone book under 'Arab'," he said. He said the church that houses the office "has been quite courageous.

"They have condemned the fire bombing, and some people have started a collection to help pay for repairs."

He criticized the Toronto police department, however, for "trying to cover the whole thing up", and described the Toronto Star's attitude toward the incident as "hands off".

"Their reporter came and spoke with us and was very enthusiastic. He said he was going to write a feature, but when he got back to his editor, the idea was dropped."

The office is on the way to being repaired, and the organization is attempting to carry on its daily business as normally as possible.



A section of the fire-bombed offices of the Arab Immigrant Information and Community Services.