

New breed of leaders emerges

By BROOKE W. KROEGER

JERUSALEM (UPI) — "They can cut off my legs but not my struggle," cried Nablus Mayor Bassam Shaka as he returned in triumph to the occupied West Bank.

"They tried to kill me but they failed," he said, baring the bandaged stumps of his blown-off legs.

Frenzied throngs turned out to greet him on return from treatment in a Jordanian hospital.

What form that struggle will take, given the events of the past two months, is the question.

On May 3, Israel summarily expelled mayors Mohammed Milhem of Halhoul and Fahd Kawasme of Hebron for allegedly creating the atmosphere in which a Palestinian ambush of Jewish worshippers in Hebron took place. One month later, Shaka and Ramallah Mayor Karim Khalaf were maimed for life in separate, almost simultaneous, car bomb blasts.

The four mayors are the most prominent members of a new breed of Palestinian leadership in the West Bank — dynamic, outspoken and strongly nationalistic. They are Palestinians first, Arabs second.

The group, now dubbed the "martyr mayors," were leading figures in the Palestinian National Guidance Committee, a group of Palestinian notables in the disputed zone. It was formed to crystallize opposition to the Camp David accords and their limited autonomy plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The group is a departure from the traditional Islamic, pro-Jordanian and family-based leadership in the territory Israel captured from Jordan in 1967.

Guidance Committee members, on the whole, are educated, urbane and uncompromising in demanding nothing less than Palestinian statehood.

Since Camp David, the Guidance Committee had gained stature in the region, enough to challenge the Palestine Liberation Organization in Beirut on matters concerning West Bank affairs.

Its members insist such challenges are like those between husband and wife in the framework of a healthy marriage. No one on the West Bank will deny the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians, a role formalized at the Rabat Arab summit in 1974.

Even before the May 2 ambush in Hebron, the Israeli military government was taking the Guidance Committee seriously enough to consider banning it outright.

Through the network of organizations, associations and other bodies represented by its 20-odd members, it was able to quickly convey ideas and resolutions to the West Bank populace, effectively calling for street demonstrations, mayoral resignations and other disruptive protests in response to events.

But the organized protests virtually have stopped. The West Bank, a boiling cauldron of resistance to the Israelis and the autonomy plan now under negotiation with Egypt and the United States, has been on simmer since the June 2 assassination attempts against Shaka and Khalaf, widely blamed on extremist Jews, though there is no proof.

There are two apparent reasons for the relative calm:

—Israel, alarmed at the heightened level of resistance activity, activated an

iron fist policy against Palestinian protests in early May. West Bankers from other towns were forbidden to travel to Nablus for Shaka's homecoming.

—The Guidance Committee, lacking its four loudest voices and too weak to challenge Israeli toughness, has been forced to lower its profile.

Some Palestinians maintain these factors have broken its back for good.

Ibrahim Dakak, a Palestinian visionary and prime mover in the Guidance Committee, is a respected engineer with offices in annexed East Jerusalem and is referred to by some as the "mayor of West

Bank mayors."

"We can't shout now, but we can still speak out," Dakak said. "The Guidance Committee may take another name, another form. But the circumstances and the struggle are exactly the same."

"The people here know that when leadership is taken away, a new one grows up better than before."

"Even if all the Palestinians were killed except one woman," Shaka exhorted his enthusiastic welcomers, "her children would carry on the fight."

The young men cheered wildly. Some of the women wept.

Calls him Zionist

PLO hates writer

By Charley Reese

I am a rather plain fellow but I do have one distinction. So far as I know, I am the only WASP conservative who has earned the title of Zionist from the PLO. A Zionist is the absolute worst thing the PLO can call you, but it's a title I wear with pride.

For one thing, I am extremely proud to be disliked by the PLO which is a collection of despicable, loud-mouthed killers and thieves. Some people manage to be evil and maintain a little dignity at the same time, but the PLO mixes evil with absurdity.

I have long contended that what the PLO needs is not a country (they already have one they stole, Lebanon) but overglasse-

winning instead of disappearing, is Israel. Israeli courts have over-ruled the military government which administers the West Bank; Israeli soldiers are prosecuted, tried, convicted and punished for mistreating Arabs (in the Arab countries no one dares raise a voice much less a hand against the ruling power).

Thirdly, Israel is a humane and decent nation. Art and education flourish despite the fact the nation has never known one day of real peace. There is no death penalty except for genocide. PLO terrorists are given legal counsel and a fair trial. The worst that can happen to the worst of them is life in prison. The prison-

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brooke_kroeger
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