

**Israeli
Educational Policy
for the
Palestinian Arabs**

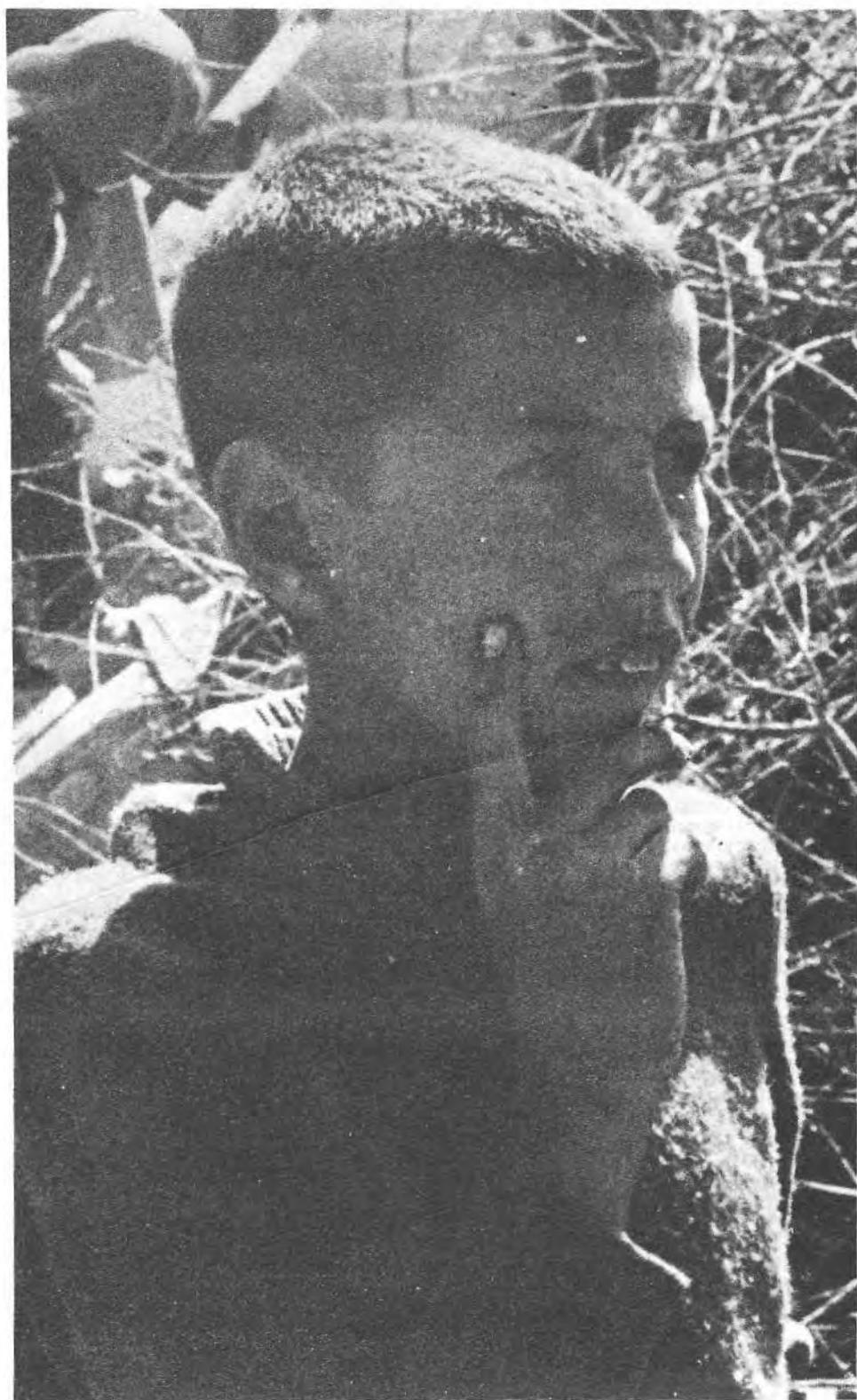
Together with the physical annihilation of the Arab people of Palestine, Israel's official policy in the territories occupied during its wars of expansion and aggression, has as its objective the systematic destruction of all that might represent a vestige of the history and national culture of these people. If anywhere in the world this keynote of imperialism and colonialism has been made evident in a brutal way, it has been in those lands occupied since 1948 or those that fell into Israel's power in 1967.

The present article, from the General Union of Palestinian Students, denounces the dangers of the Zionist educational policy as an instrument that separates the elements of which the Palestinian nationality is constituted.

Objectives of Israel's education policy for the Arabs

The educational policy of any regime or government is intimately related to the general political goals of that government or system. It is absolutely impossible to disassociate the aims of education from the aims of the government or system since education, like any other activity, constitutes the reflection of the mentality of the society.

1. Israel is a State that practices racism and discrimination in religion, because it is a State for Jews only, in which all power is in the hands of Zionist Jews and is exclusively at the service of their interests. Thus it can grant no type of political or social liberty to anyone who is not Zionist,



and it will never accept a democratic society based on equality of opportunity for all its inhabitants.

2. Israel is an artificial State. Therefore, its policy operates in behalf of its projected creation of a new Palestine and the annihilation of the old one by all the means at its disposal.
3. Israel is a State unrecognized by the Arab states on its borders. It cannot guarantee its existence or its survival without being accepted by the Arabs. Therefore its policy is based on forcing the Arabs to recognize it and making them recognize its right to exist in the territory that originally belonged to the Arabs of Palestine.

The three political considerations we have just outlined are confirmed by the orientation of the Israeli government's educational program which is: not to raise the educational level of the Arab minority living in Israel since, to do so, would make that minority capable of holding important posts in the administration, thereby contradicting Israel's racist policy of attempting to keep all power in the hands of the Zionists.

Since 1948, Israel has opposed raising the level of education given to the Arabs who live in that territory for the very important reason that, to do so, would lead (within this racist regime and in the absence of all possibility of promotion for the Arabs) to the creation of a group of Arab thinkers and educated members of that nationality, whose ideological convictions would be radical and would have determined political goals. This, of course, would threaten the racist and reli-

gious bases on which Israel stands and would destroy the possibility of creating a "new reality" which could supposedly win acceptance from the Arabs.

Nature and extent of educational problems

It is worth calling attention to the fact that these problems of educating Arabs under Israeli occupation were intentionally created by Israel to facilitate the practical execution of its specific educational policy of discrimination.

In order to be able to fulfill its political designs through education, Israel had to assume control of the Arab educational system. To those ends, it selected and named the teaching personnel. Textbooks and even examination questions were published or printed under its supervision. School buildings were also placed under the supervision of Israeli authorities.

The nature of the educational problems of the Arabs of Israel since 1948, stems from the fact that they have been subjected to a program of intentional illiteracy which affects them socially as well as mentally. This policy confines them to the lowest strata of society, in order to be exploited by the Zionists in the construction of their own economy.

As far as the Arabs whose lands were occupied in 1967 are concerned, their educational problem stems from the fact that Israel is trying to isolate them from the rest of the Arab society, in order to be able to treat them later in the same way it has treated the Arabs whose lands were occupied in 1948.

The principal reasons for these educational problems stem from the



systematic impoverishment imposed by Israel on the Arab educational system in the territories it has occupied and which serve the objectives of the occupants. The magnitude of these problems can be summarized in the following points:

1. Education in Gaza and on the west bank of the Jordan (regions under Israeli occupation since June 1967) are in the hands of the Israeli military authorities. On July 17, 1969, the Israeli authorities published a new law, number 565, under which the opening of new schools without permission of the Department of Education of the Israēlī Ministry of Culture is forbidden. The new law stipulates detailed conditions for the construction of new schools, their study plans, their teaching personnel and other related matters. It grants the General Commissions the right to close these schools when they deem it convenient.

2. Both books and school programs drawn up by the Jordanian and Egyptian authorities for the schools on the West Bank and in Gaza have been abolished because the Israeli authorities argue that, with them, children are taught to hate Israel. But a general strike of Palestinian teachers and students and numerous protest demonstrations forced the Israeli authorities to make concessions, introducing certain corrections in the books and nothing more. Seventy-eight of the 121 textbooks published have been revised. Everything that could recall to the Arab children their land, their history, their past, has been eliminated from them. Moreover, all history books dealing with the struggle of the Arabs for their unification have been withdrawn from circulation.

These revisions and changes also affect the Arab language books. All the old Arab proverbs that express

the idea of an Arab national consciousness have been replaced by other new ones that contain a very different vision. All reference to the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland has been eliminated from the books. Thus, for example, lesson number 13 on page 38 of the Arab grammar for the sixth course, titled "We Will Return Tomorrow," was eliminated. Dawood Mizrahi, professor of Islamic History at the Hebrew University and representative of the Prime Minister on the West Bank, told an Arab delegation that the Israelis have revised all the Arab textbooks for the schools and that the Arabs have no right to discuss them but only to read them just as they are.

3. Israel has modified the school program in the governmental Arab schools of Jerusalem, changing the Arab system to the Israeli system of education, under the argument of the definitive annexation of Jerusalem. At the same time, it has ordered that all private schools use either the Israeli or the modified Jordanian educational system in their lessons.

4. Israel is using every type of political and financial pressure to cause the private Arab schools to go bankrupt and eventually include them within its own Ministry of Education.

5. Israel controls the editing of all books published on the West Bank and does not permit publication or distribution of any book that is not in agreement with its political purposes in the occupied territories.

6. Israel pressures the Arab students to abandon school and go into Israeli factories as workers, thus pursuing two objectives: first, to



keep the educational level very low among the Arabs; second, to exploit their work force for the development of its own economy.

The breath of the educational problem of the Arabs living under Israeli occupation since 1948 can be summarized in the following manner:

Administration

Israel controls the administration of Arab education and has placed it in the hands of six different authorities: the military governor, the Arab administration of the *Histadrut*, the Military Intelligence Service, the Arab Administrative Department for Arab Affairs attached to the Ministry of Education, the counsellor of the Prime Minister and, finally, the offices of the Israeli political parties. This extensive number of supervisors for Arab education places it under a strict control and causes confusion and stagnation in education.

School buildings

They are inadequate for teaching Arab children. They are now old and semi-destroyed; they consist of small badly lighted rooms. They have no sanitary facilities, nor playgrounds nor recreation yards. The furniture is insufficient and in poor condition. The Israeli authorities have taken advantage of a law to keep the Arab schools in the condition in which they originally found them in 1948. The law in question excuses the Israeli Ministry of Education from providing buildings, furniture or recreation areas for the Arab schools. It is presumed that these are to be under the jurisdiction of the administration of the Jewish colonies through the Jewish Agency and municipal local government. But up to 1963, 61%

of the villages had no local or municipal government. The establishment of such governments falls within the functions of the Ministry of the Interior.

Textbooks

The Arab schools suffer a scarcity of pedagogical materials. Both teachers and students must use textbooks that are now very old. Moreover, the Arab libraries in Israel are very poorly equipped with any kind of books even educational and textbooks. The Israeli authorities prohibit the use of school books that were employed during the period of British colonialism and do not permit the use of school books that come from neighboring Arab countries, under the pretext that Israel will print its own books. But the reality is that the country has made no effort whatsoever to publish books for the Arab schools. The reason, according to them, lies in the small Arab population in Israel, which makes the printing and publication of these books very costly.

Teachers

The main target of the Israeli authorities is the teacher, the most important factor in education. The six administrative corps for education previously mentioned try to exercise total control over the Palestinian teachers both during their training period and during their professional activity, using every means within their reach including the exercise of economic pressures. In many cases, this influences the positive aspects of their personality, affecting them psychologically.

The teacher's social position and



the way he is selected and named has been responsible for the complete failure of education. The study made of this situation by a delegation of North American teachers revealed the following facts about Palestinian teachers in Israel:

a) The naming of a teacher depends on his political opinions and not on his academic qualification;

b) Supervision and direction of teachers is extremely strict politically, but deficient culturally and educationally. The objective Israel pursues with this attitude is to make certain that Arab students lack national orientation. They are not in the least concerned about the teacher's obligations as pedagogue.

c) This stimulates the teacher to comply with the instructions he receives from the ministry without paying any attention to the students' needs, since he knows that no one will blame him for that.

d) In the school year 1966-1967 there were 1830 Arab teachers, including some Jewish immigrants from the Arab countries, against 39 148 Israeli teachers. This means that there were five teachers for every 1000 Arabs and 20 teachers for every 1000 Israelis.

e) In addition to the very small number of teachers for the Arabs, in 1968, 50% of them were not qualified to teach.

f) In Jaffa a normal school was opened in 1956 but in almost 20 years it has been unable to train a sufficient number of teachers. The purpose of this normal school was originally to prepare teachers in Arab schools who would be at the service of Zionism.

Students

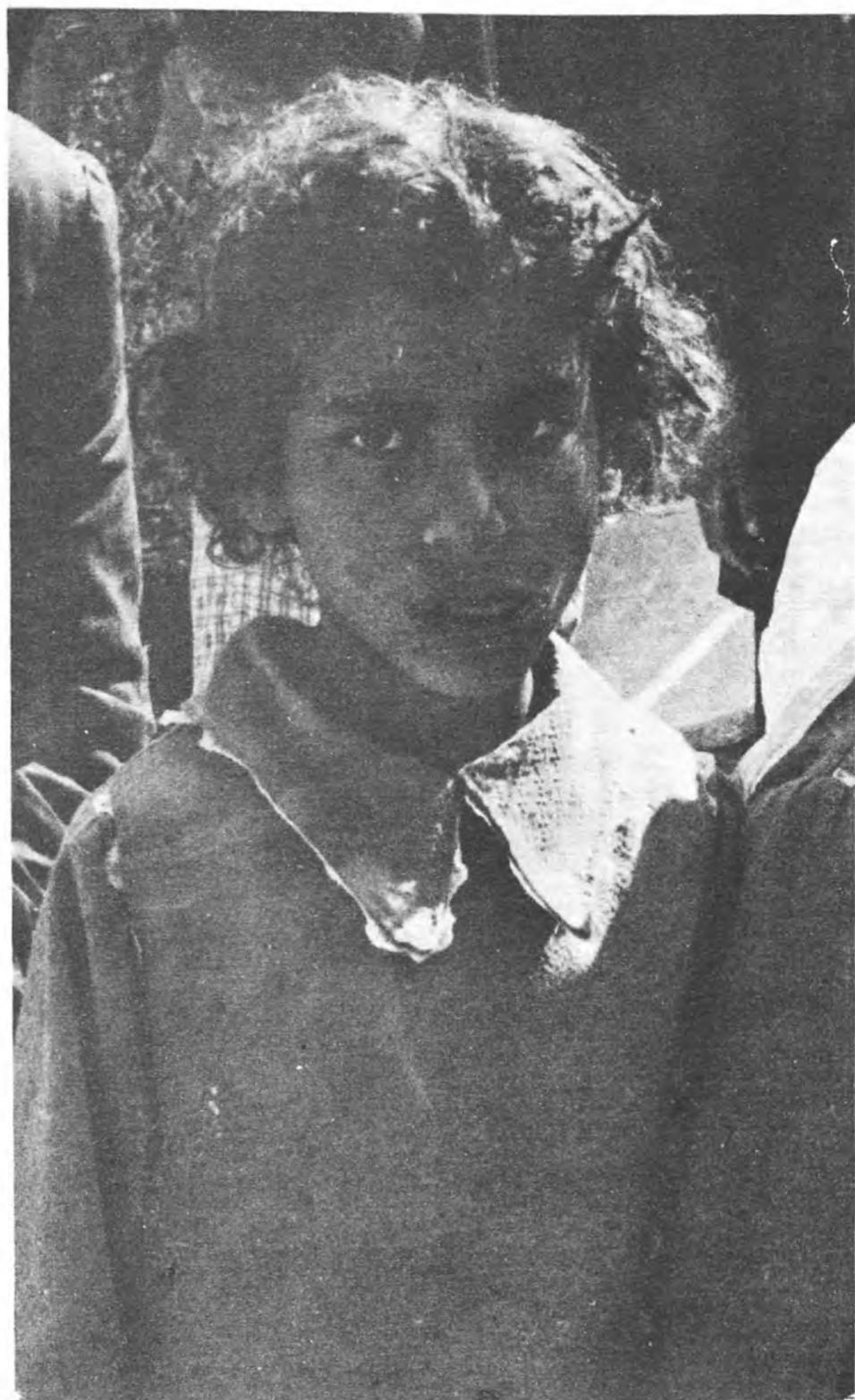
The Arabs in Israel suffer from lack of knowledge. The number of Arab students is very small in comparison to the number of Jewish

students. The reason for this situation has already been pointed out. Moreover, the Israeli authorities make no effort to comply with the Law of Obligatory Education for the children who live in Arab regions. The result of this is that, in the period from 1950 to 1960, between 25% and 30% of school-age Arab children were not in school, while only 2.3% of Jewish children were in the same situation. In the period between 1955 and 1956, 60% of Arab children at the intermediary and secondary level were not in school, as compared to 8.6% of Jewish children. The percentage of Arab students who attended secondary school between 1966 and 1967 was 22.7% compared to 88.7% of Jewish children. The percentage of Arab students who do not obtain the general school diploma is very high. In 1962 it was 90% and in 1965, 70%.

Discrimination against Arab students in the higher educational field is clear. The only university they are permitted to attend is the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. It is hard to find a single Arab student in any of the other five universities or in the other advanced schools in Israel. Of the 350 000 Arab inhabitants living in the Zionist State, only 250 young people have reached the higher level of education. This is the equivalent of less than 0.5%. But even this small group is denied technical education. In the period between 1970 and 1971 there were 29 500 university students in Israel; of these only 40 were Arabs.

The educational programs

The Israeli authorities completely supervise the education the Arabs receive. With this attitude they are trying to destroy all that could ap-



proximate an Arab way of life, replacing it with another of a Zionist character. In this way, the Arabs are deprived of all possibility of rebelling. This program is carried out through education in four subjects: History, Literature, Religion, Civics.

History

The history taught to Jewish students seeks above all to create in them a consciousness of their reality and of their society and, second, to stimulate them toward the creation of an Israeli nationalism whose existence depends on the existence of all Jews. Arab students are taught that their lives and the lives of the Jews are interdependent and that, therefore, they must defend the existence of Israel.

The Arab students are given examples of Arab and Jewish personalities while the Jewish students are given examples of Jewish personalities only, since "the Arabs are not equal to the Jews." This is only one element in the systematic policy of discrimination.

The distribution of courses is as follows: for Arab students, 20.6% of the total number of class hours is devoted to the study of Jewish history; 19.5% to the history of the Arabs. For Jewish students, 40.9% of class hours devoted to the study of history is utilized to study their own history, while only 3.1% of this time is devoted to the deformed study of the history of the Arabs. One can thus appreciate how Israel is trying to undermine the historical roots of the Arab nation, while providing them with biased information on the history of their oppressors.

Literature and language

1. Israeli students are taught liter-

ature, while the Arabs are taught only to read and write.

2. The Zionist program devotes its attention to the national aspect of literature and language, while the Arab program does not even mention the Arab homeland.

3. The Jews are taught universal literature for the purpose of making them understand different problems and schools of thought. The Arabs are deprived of this context.

4. The teaching of Arab literature omits Arab ideals.

5. The teaching of the Hebrew language is designed to give the Arabs a good understanding of that language so that they can understand Jewish history.

6. The Zionist program seeks to teach literature as art; the Arabs are taught only the history of literature. The literature educational program is divided in the following way:

In the Israeli schools 512 hours are devoted to the study of Jewish literature and none to the study of Arab literature. In the Arab schools, 420 hours are devoted to the teaching of Arab literature and 340 hours to Jewish literature. In the Israeli schools 256 hours are devoted to the teaching of the Hebrew language and none to the teaching of Arabic. The Arab schools, on the other hand, give 404 class hours in Arabic and 172 hours in Hebrew.

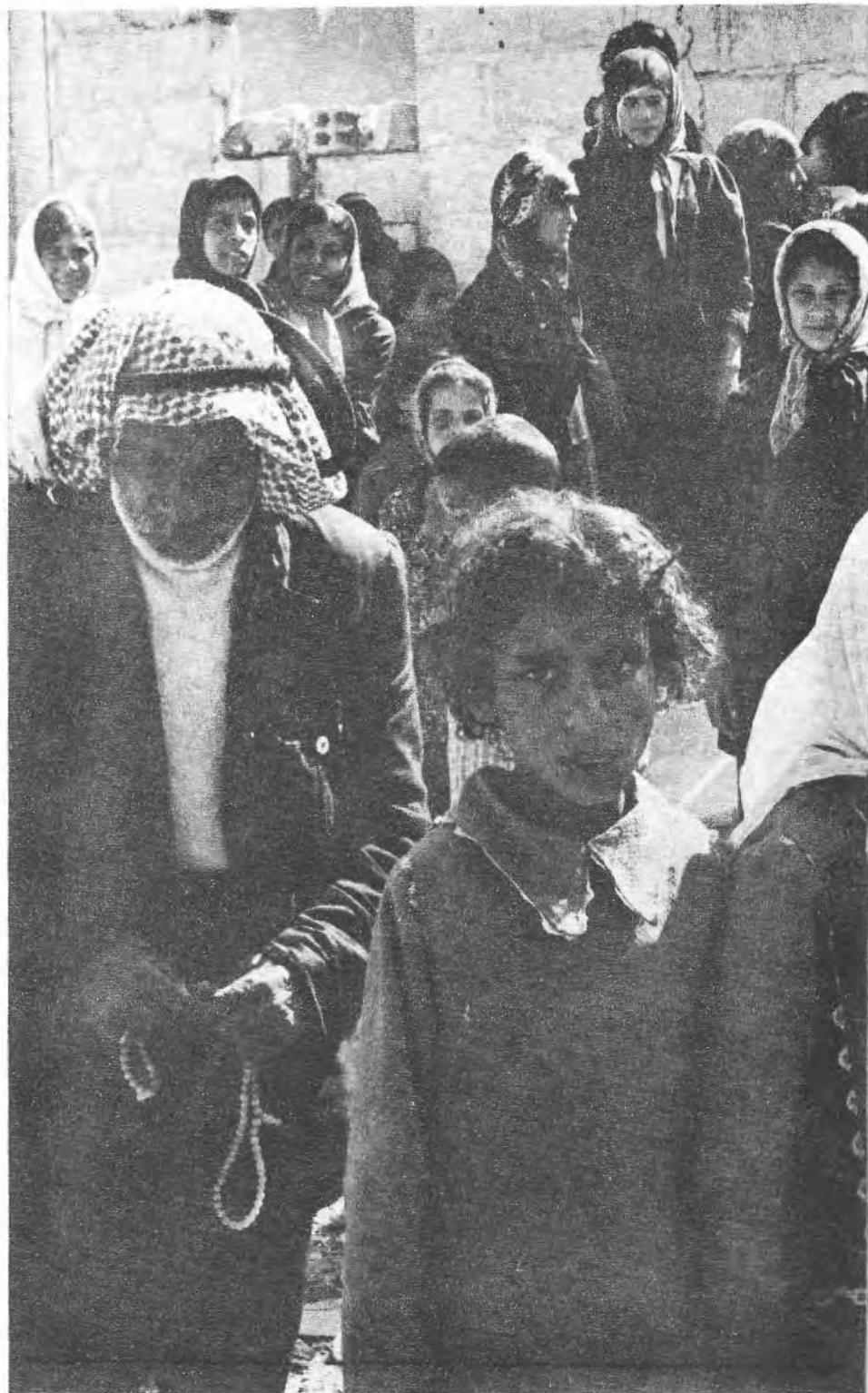
Poetry

On the following themes:

Description, oration, love and human idealism.

1. The Arabs under the occupation since 1948 are not taught the poetry of any Palestinian poet after that date.

2. Poems about Palestine are not taught.



Civics

Knowledge of History, Literature and Religion are imparted in such a way that the Arab students are uprooted from their own past and their own history. Civics has the mission of implanting new values through the following procedures.

1. A single program is taught to all students. This means that the Arabs are taught to respect Israel and to help it fulfill its policy.

2. One single theme — that of Israel — is taught to all alike, including its objectives, its government, and its political, social and economic system.

3. Nothing is said about the life of the Arab minority that lives in Israel.

4. As for religious themes, these are taught in the same way for all students.

Arab students receive only 50% of the total number of hours devoted to the study of Civics.

Dangers of Israel's educational policy for the Arabs that live under the occupation

The policy Israel follows in education presents numerous dangers for the present and future education of the Arabs that live under the occupation regime. These dangers affect their national consciousness, their religion, social level, economic and cultural position.

As far as national consciousness is concerned, the educational policy applied both to the Arabs under occupation since 1948 and to those under occupation since 1967, undermines the fundamentals of their national consciousness. Naturally, this represents a great threat since this subjugated population could remain totally isolated from the Arab national movement and from the main current of Arab destiny. Is-

rael, is trying to inculcate in them the consciousness of an uprooted minority within the Israeli society. This minority will become "israelized" in the future, because of its knowledge of the Hebrew language, the Jewish religion, the history and the culture of Israel, since it will have no access to knowledge of any other culture.

The danger inherent in the religious education these young people are receiving is immense, since religion plays an important role in the formation of the Arab personality. In Israel the Islamic religion is not taught, although the Koran is taught as the highest form of Arab literature and language. In Israel, the Christian religion is never taught.

Since Israel seeks to keep the Arabs at a low level of education, the Arabs will always find themselves in the position of a working group serving the Jews in a society that hopes to be highly developed from the scientific and technological point of view. Thus the Arabs must form an ignorant community directed and controlled by those educated Jews who rule in this socio-economic regime. This situation requires the Arabs who live in the occupied lands to conform to a low standard of living and to live under a regime that offers them no opportunity to improve their living conditions. Moreover, their means of subsistence depends on the will of the Jewish regime.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the danger that Zionist occupation represents for Arab culture.

The Arabs who live in Israel are treated like mere utensils incapable of playing an active and creative role in the progress of humanity or even in that of the Arab nation.