

# 'Advocate for peace' is author's mission

By Ruby L. Bailey  
special writer

He has been called a terrorist. His enemies say he has no cause, just a desire to wage war. Under his leadership, his country has actually lost some of the land it is trying to control and is facing potential Armageddon. Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO, is viewed by most of the fanatic leader of a terrorist organization.

Yet Alan Hart, a former British foreign television correspondent with 15 years of experience covering the Middle East, has written a book that paints quite a different portrait of the man who is considered a mere caricature in the Western media.

"Arafat," Hart said, "is a man driven by a burning sense of injustice at what has been done to his people."

Oddly enough, Hart has dedicated this book, "Arafat: A Political Biography," to those at the other end of the 40-year-old conflict — the Israelis.

"To my many Israeli and other Jewish friends . . . in the hope that the story this book has to tell will encourage them and their friends to give peace a chance," the dedication reads.

"PEACE in the Middle East," Hart said, "is why I wrote this book. If we are to have peace, we need dialogue, dialogue, dialogue. And if we are to have dialogue and debate, we must actually have both sides of the story."

What I'm hoping to do with this book is provide some balance so that there can be a rational dialogue in the hope that that will lead to peace."

Hart recently traveled to the metropolitan Detroit area as a part of a national tour to promote the revised version of his book, released in England in 1984 and the United States in 1985.

WHILE HERE, Hart was interviewed on local radio stations, spoke to groups at the Ramallah Club in Livonia and the Metropolitan United Methodist Church in the New Center area of downtown Detroit, and made an appearance on Channel 50's "Morning Break" talk show.

## review

"Detractors," he said, "are asking questions. They are saying, 'Give us more.' Americans in general are more receptive now."

During the 1988 tour, Hart appeared on approximately 300 talk shows. He and his agent approached 40 U.S. publishers, but each declined to take on a title about such a potentially explosive topic.

"They (the publishers) were afraid the (Israeli) lobby would organize boycotts against the bookshops," Hart said.

When Hart announced in early 1988 that the book was revised to include the 1988 uprising in the occupied territories, "18 American publishers showed interest and many had very positive recommendations from readers," Hart said.

"But when the crunch came, it was Indiana (University Press) that had the courage to go ahead. It's simply time somebody ended this conspiracy of silence about the man Arafat and the reality of his cause and what he represents."

HART GAINED first-hand knowledge of Arafat and what Hart calls his "desire for a compromise peace with Israel and his ability to deliver it" during a 1979 peace initiative.

Chosen by certain "enlightened" Israeli leaders in London, Hart was to negotiate a peace agreement between Arafat and leaders of the Labor Party, which was attempting to unseat Menachem Begin in the coming election.

Unexpectedly, Begin won the election, "which blew negotiations out of the waters," Hart said, and the initiative was aborted. But it allowed Hart "to get to know the man's soul. The book came out of that," Hart said.

THROUGH HUNDREDS of hours of interviews with Arafat and the leadership of the PLO, Hart's work provides an in-depth look at Arafat as a man and a leader. Set in its global context, the book offers a detailed account of Arafat's activities from 1948 to what Hart describes as

the "inside story" of the 1988 Palestinian uprising.

The final chapter, "Last Thoughts," offers Hart's perception of Arafat and how history might view the leader.

"Basically what I say to my readers is, 'Look folks, you all know approximately Israel's version of the Palestinian's story because we've had it for 40 years. What you do not know is that there is another side to this story — the Palestinian side, Arafat's side, the PLO side.' It's (the book) an attempt to tell the whole story through other than Israeli eyes."

THE MOST important message the book brings, according to Hart, comes from a conversation with his friend Sholomo Gazit, a former director of military intelligence research in Israel.

"The trouble with us Israelis is that we've become victims of our own propaganda," Gazit said.

"Israel has shifted propaganda over the years," Hart said. "First they said that the Palestinians don't exist. Then they said, 'Ah, but they're a bunch of terrorists.' Later, they've claimed that you can't trust Arafat."

"The Israelis have been able to convince us for all those years that the Jewish state has stood in hour-by-hour danger. There has actually never been a serious Arab military threat to Israel. It's all propaganda. The problem is, that they now believe it."

Hart paints a dim picture for Israel's future if the country's leaders remain unwilling to negotiate. In 15 to 20 years, Hart estimates, the number of Arabs will actually be greater than the number of Jews in Greater Israel.

"THEIR OPTIONS will then be to give everybody the vote, in which case the Jewish state would be killed by democracy," Hart said, "or deny the majority and a minority of Jews will rule by repression a majority of Arabs."

"Or they could 'solve' the problem by driving all the Arabs out of the occupied territories, creating more bitterness and leaving Israel totally without friends in the world."

"In every Palestinian, including Arafat, there is a conflict between the head and the heart. The heart

says, 'Why the hell should we make peace with the Jews in Israel?' But what the head says is, 'We have no choice. Israel needs a leader with the courage to make them face up to essentially the same thing and the reality that Arafat just could be a peacemaker.'"

With the book's one-sided approach to covering the Israeli-Arab conflict, Hart accepts that he runs the risk of being deemed an advocate of Arafat and the PLO.

"But what I am in this book is an advocate for peace," Hart said.

The Jews are the intellectual elite of the Western civilization and the Palestinians are without a doubt the intellectual elite of theirs," Hart said, "and together in peace and partnership, with their brain power and resources, what they could do in peace is the stuff that dreams are made of. And from my own secret peace initiative I know it's possible."

"Arafat: A Political Biography" is priced at \$18.95 in paperback and \$39.95 in cloth cover. To order, call 1-800-342-6796.

Ruby Bailey is an area freelance writer.



British author Alan Hart said the world is well acquainted with the Israeli version of the Palestinian conflict. The book is an attempt to tell the whole story through other than Israeli eyes.

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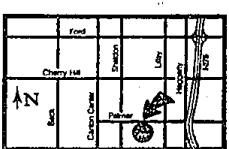
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