

Peace process - A critical stance

LET US LIVE LIKE HUMAN BEINGS: Deception and Reality in Palestine (Laßt uns wie Menschen leben: Schein und Wirklichkeit in Palästina) by Felicia Langer, Lamuv, Göttingen 1996, 207 Seiten, DM 32.

**Reviewed by
Ludwig Watzal**

SINCE September 1993 Israelis and Palestinians have been trying to solve a conflict which began with the Zionist encroachment in Palestine at the end of the 19th century. This Zionist venture is a process through which the Palestinian nation is systematically, deliberately and continually being dispossessed of its own land, with the Zionists hoping that ultimately there will no longer be a Palestinian nation. Especially after the "... belligerent occupation" in June 1967, the Israeli political class adhered to the territory which belongs to the Palestinians. In order to prevent the Palestinians from getting it back, the Israelis violated the human rights of the Palestinian people in a severe and systematic manner.

Felicia Langer, the Israeli lawyer who lives in Germany, fought from the beginning of the occupation for the rights of Palestinians before Israeli courts. She left Israel protesting against the Israeli court system which did not grant the Palestinian justice, and even in Germany she has been upholding Palestinian rights. For her tireless efforts she received, in 1990, the alternative Nobel Prize, "The Right Livelihood Award".

In her latest book Ms. Langer breaks the magic spell of the so called peace process. Consequently she is very critical of it. This is very important in Germany because the media still tries to portray this process as the road to peace. The reality is very different, a fact which the Germans constantly ignore. The so called peace process is based on the total subjugation of the Palestinian people under Israeli control and American dominance. The Palestinians have been forced to live in a prison, to which Israel holds the key, and Arafat's police and secret service personnel are playing the role of subordinate prison guards. During her last visit to

Israel/Palestine Ms. Langer tried in vain to enter "...this prison which is called Gaza." After hours of waiting she formed an "...impression of its composition." Arafat and his military and political classes are, according to Langer, torturing and intimidating their fellow countrymen, a process from which they alone benefit. They are living in a "...VIP kingdom" to which Israel gives the entry and exit permits.

Felicia Langer's critical stance towards the so called peace process is very realistic. The Palestinians are full of illusions when hoping that Israel will make further major concessions. The so called Hebron-agreement was another setback for the Palestinian road to statehood. After the election of Benjamin Netanyahu, Langer writes, "...The situation became much clearer without the Orwellian rhetoric of the Labor party, which gave rise to illusion and produced a kind of virtual reality."

Ms. Langer has written the book for the German public. It closes an information gap which exists in the country.

One can hope that a great number of Germans will read it because many have a false image of both peoples in Israel/Palestine, especially where the Israelis are concerned.

The Germans are disappointed with Netanyahu because he spoiled their romantic image of Israel. Langer's book will remove these illusions and bring the Germans back to reality. They have to understand that this conflict can only be solved when Israel makes amends, at least in part, for the injustices to which the Palestinians have been subjected during the 30 years of occupation. Without such a reparation there will be no durable peace.

One must doubt whether the majority in Germany have the courage to demand this of Israel. Felicia Langer does. Her book is directly to the point. It tells the truth. And it calls upon the Palestinians to stick to their rights and not give in to Israeli pressure. In this sense the book is a must for anyone with an interest in politics, and a contribution to a just peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.