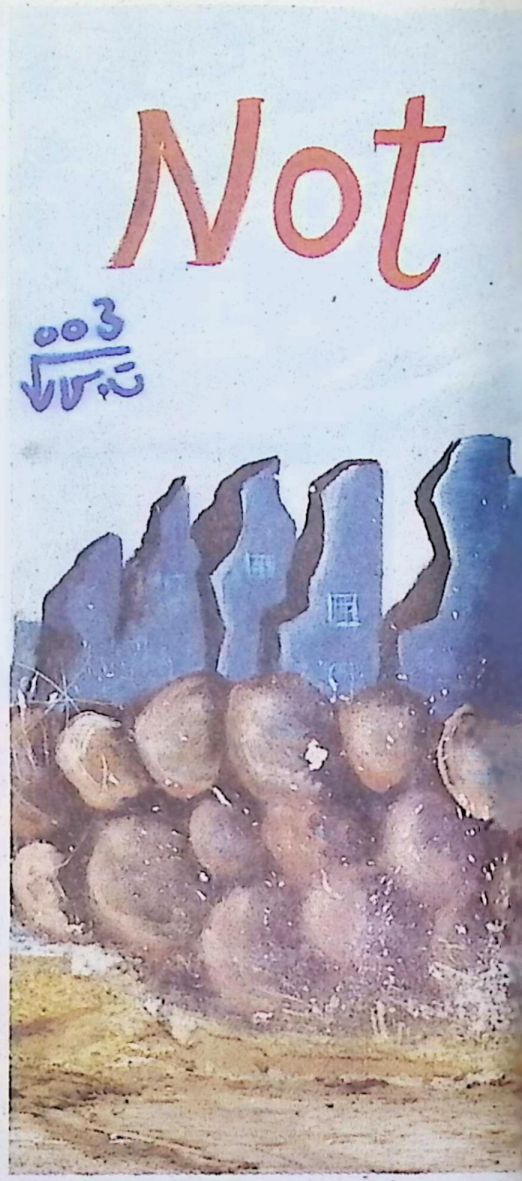
The Mendacity of Missed Opportunities

M. Shahid Alam defends the Palestinians



"There has been Anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, Auschwitz, but was that their fault? They see but one thing: we have come and we have stolen their country. Why would they accept that?"

"Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages ... There is not a single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population."

- David Ben-Gurion'

ALL too often, the failure of Israel and the Arabs to make peace -- especially since the creation of Israel -- has been described as the folly of missed opportunities. In a discourse that is dominated by the Zionists, the Palestinians are forced to carry much of the burden of this folly.

How often have the Zionists, with the delightful malice of the strong, accused the Palestinians, using the words of Abba Eban, that they "never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity"?

The objective of these Zionist accusations is plain: blame the victims. In order to make their accusations stick, the Zionists have elaborated a false but imposing history of their movement. In this history, it is the Jews who have the original, historical, natural, eternal, God-ordained, and Biblical right to Palestine.

The Zionists also invented an entirely new species of claim to our affections -- one that trumps all morality and man-made laws -- because Jews were the victims of a uniquely inhuman crime.

At the same time, the Zionists have laboured hard to represent Palestine as empty, a land that had fallen into decay with the departure of its Jewish owners. The few Arabs occupants of this now desolate land are Bedouins, mere squatters, migrants, with no attachment to the land. They are only part of the wild fauna of Palestine, to be cleared as the colonists take possession of their divine patrimony.

Once their rights had been