

# faith and development

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## Palestine - Israel

### THE PRICE OF AN AUTHENTIC PEACE

Michael Warschawski

Israelis and Palestinians are slowly but surely moving towards a state of terror. The spectre of total war takes form behind each gruesome count of victims, a quasi-matinal ritual since the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 2000. That dark day, Ariel Sharon had provoked a Palestinian uprising by stepping on the « Temple Mount », otherwise known as « The Noble Sanctuary » of Muslims, to deliver a speech in the very heart of the Old City of Jerusalem. The very next day, blood flowed on the memory of a dead aspiration : the peace process. Who shall find the way to pacification ? And when ? No one dares say. Fatality becomes the rule. Hostilities have turned into visceral hatred.

And yet, women and men on both sides refuse to give up. Among them, the philosopher and journalist Michael Warschawski. Born in 1949 in Strasbourg of an orthodox Jewish family, this activist for Israeli-Palestinian peace came to Jerusalem in 1965, to study in a Talmudic school. In 1967 -the year of the war of six days-, he enrolled at the Hebrew University. But from the very first day, he actively protested the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Convinced that peace can have no other base than that of rights and justice, he founded in 1984 the AIC (Alternative Information Center), with the headquarters

in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, an NGO jointly run by Palestinians and Israelis.

This brave man, married with three children, was made to pay for his pacifist combat, in 1987, when he was arrested « for having supported illegal Palestinian organizations ». Two years later, he was sentenced to 30-month imprisonment, a decision later reduced to 8 months of solitary confinement, in 1990.

A year after the outbreak of the second Intifada, *Faith and Development* offers its readers this analysis by an Israeli Jew. This article is a challenge and a wager. A challenge to the bearer of arms and tears. A wager on the chances of dialogue between Palestinians and the Hebrew state. Michael Warschawski defends the audacious thesis that Israel « cannot and should not separate itself from its Arab-environment ». The future of peace and of Israel itself will depend on its determination to integrate in the region. It is rare, very rare indeed, that Israeli voices plead, with such transparency, the emergence of a culture of peace in the Middle-East. It has become urgent to listen to that of Michael Warschawski, for it gives us reason to hope, again.

*Albert Longchamp*

Since the Gulf War, the concept of peace has been totally exhausted. The first among the imperial wars within the American New World Order, wasn't the Gulf War presented as a means of imposing peace in Kuwait? It was already the case, less than a decade earlier, when the Israeli army invaded Lebanon, with Operation « Peace in Galilee ». Things are happening as if, at the turn of this millennium, the worst horrors and the most bloody aggressions could not get popular approval unless presented from a peace angle.

## THE PEACE PROCESS

The concept of peace, in the absence of a more precise definition, can take on very different meanings. It can mean the end of a conflict, or simply the desire to be left alone (« *Leave us in peace!* »); it can be the fruit of a more or less equitable compromise, or the total defeat of an enemy (the peace of the tomb); it can also mean the return of law in bilateral agreements, but also the surrender by one of the two conflicting parties. This matter of defining peace has become quite pertinent since the Israeli-Palestinian relations fell within the framework of what is commonly known as the « *peace process* ».

Since 1991, the Middle-East has indeed entered the era of the « *peace process* ». If contradictory terms can hide behind the word « *peace* », the concept of « *process* » is even more deceiving. For several years, it has made us believe in an objective dynamics, quasi-natural and independent of the acts of men and women. Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles (DOP) in Washington in September 1993, ratifying the Oslo agreements, rare were the commentators who doubted the « *irreversibility* » of the process clinched by the historical handshake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat.

And yet, in September 2000, the peace process ran aground like a lost ship on the reefs of Jerusalem,

the colonies and the Palestinian refugees, that is to say, on the very issues it was supposed to solve. The inevitable did not materialize; the irreversible proved to be reversible.

Everyone or almost everyone was surprised! All hopes for peace, for security and reconciliation fell apart in just a few days, giving way to new developments in the conflict, even more violent than before. How did we ever get there? This is the question asked by those directly involved in the conflict and those who have been mere observers or, at times, intermediaries, who, besides, are not always without some vested interests. This is the question they ask or should ask, since many Israelis have already replied by pointing an accusing finger at the Palestinians and their leaders, and concluding with a condemnation of their enemies' « *unreasonableness* ».

## A GREAT MISUNDERSTANDING

There had been telling signs, however, in the last years, of a deadlock in the « *process* » since the failure of the Camp David negotiations in July 2000.<sup>1</sup> And, even if the present dominant feeling is one of surprise, there had been several positions and analyses predicting the failure of this process. Indeed, it quickly turned out that the whole period between the signing of the Declaration of Principles, and the Summit of Camp David, was replete with great misunderstandings: misunderstanding on the reality of the conflict, for which they tried to negotiate the solution; and misunderstanding on the conditions of peace.

Let us put aside the position of extremist Israelis who tend to hold the Palestinians solely responsible for the conflict. According to them, these latter, in their relentless opposition to the very existence of a Jewish community in the Middle East, would have led, for more than a century, a terrorist campaign with the intention of annihilating the Jewish presence in Palestine.<sup>2</sup> This

way of thinking rejects in advance all possible means of negotiating and finding a solution. The conflict becomes a fight to the death between two peoples, the existence of one depending on the destruction of the other. Let us examine instead, the positions and perceptions which have guided the partners in the negotiated process, both supported by the majority of their respective public opinion.

As far as the Israelis are concerned, the conflict has put together two asymmetrical entities fighting for a territory for which each claims absolute ownership. Thus, they needed to find a reasonable compromise able to put an end to their dispute. This position has been pursued by different American governments since 1994, who no longer speak of « *occupied territories* » but of « *territories whose final status is under negotiation* ». It goes without saying that with this approach to the conflict the relationship of forces between the protagonists is one of the factors to be taken into consideration, the weaker having to make more compromises than the stronger.

As for the Palestinians, they believe that the conflict calls for reparation, of the wrong done them, and the recuperation of their rights as recognized by the UN resolutions, the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention and the UN Charter. Conscious of the relationship of forces, the PLO has already made concessions in recognizing the state of Israel within its June 4, 1967 frontiers, which is much more than was provided for in the November 1947 UN resolution for the future Jewish state. The Palestinians believe that the negotiated process has thus only one objective of deciding the modalities of implementing the resolutions of the UN and of international law: the retreat of the Israeli army from the West Bank (including the part of Jerusalem belonging to it), the dismantling of the colonies qualified by the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention as war crimes, and the return of the refugees. These objectives are not negotiable, only those of the modalities and the pace of their realization. One could

possibly envisage some exceptions : the exchange of territories, the particular status of the Jewish Holy Land in East-Jerusalem...

Contrary to the Israeli-American position, the West Bank (including East-Jerusalem) and the Gaza strip are occupied territories, thus intended to be evacuated as soon as an agreement is found. As to the colonies, they are illegal entities which are intended to be dismantled. And the refugees, as refugees, have the inalienable right to return to their country and recover their personal properties. This is the position taken by the international community, with the exception of the U.S. and Micronesia.

The profound differences of opinion on the nature of the conflict, and therefore, on the aim of the negotiations, certainly have repercussions on the nature of peace. We must bear in mind that this latter is meant to be the ultimate objective of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. For the Palestinians, peace would mean the realization of law, however imperfect this may be.

For the Israelis, on the contrary, peace means neutralizing the Palestinian national struggle, and separation. Anything that guarantees more separation is a step forward to peace, regardless of the Palestinian opinion. The isolation of the occupied territories, established from the very start of negotiations, is lived by Palestinians as a real aggression to their liberty of movement. But, for the majority of the Israeli peace activists, it is seen as one of the most significant moves forward to peace, being the start of their desired : « We in our homes, and they in theirs. »

As long as peace for one is lived as an aggression by the other, the chances of seeing peace negotiations emerge are of course minimal.

## **DOMINANT TO DOMINATED RELATIONSHIPS**

« Don't worry, nothing will change. » It is in these terms, at the least surprising, that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin tried to convince the

Israeli public opinion to accept the general lines of the Oslo Agreement. What is grave is that nothing has fundamentally changed. Whereas, after a hundred years of conflict, as the preamble of the Declaration of Principles recalls with precision, everything should have changed. Especially if the objective is, not only the end of hostilities, but also, reconciliation. It is difficult to understand the existence of such a gap between the ultimate objective, which is reconciliation, and the decision that nothing must change - according to the Israeli point of view, of course.

And yet, if we want to move on from a more-than-a-century-old conflict towards peace, everything, or almost everything, must change. And firstly, in terms of relating to the other. Yet, as the Israeli journalist, Uri Avneri, had pointed out on different occasions after acknowledging the failure of Camp David : « what is being confirmed, in the actual incapacity of Israeli peace activists to understand Israel's part in the failure of the peace process is the fact that, in the last six years, we have not known how to treat the Palestinians on an equal basis. »

The negotiations and the implementation of the agreements have reproduced the dominant-dominated type of relationship : Israel has dictated its conditions, imposed its reading of the agreements and its concept of security and fixed the parameters of negotiations. It has chosen to withdraw each time it esteemed necessary to « punish » the Palestinians.

The military forces have not changed their attitude vis-a-vis the Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza (except towards the VIPs, who were either given better treatment or refused such treatment, depending on the whims of the occupying forces).

The military tribunals continue as if nothing had happened in Washington in September 1993. The refusal to liberate all political prisoners is in this sense quite symbolical. It was only after long negotiations that the majority of those imprisoned for having fought

against the occupation were released. To this day, many still remain in prison.

One continues to witness this relationship of forces, which perpetuates a more and more humiliating imbalance : the Palestinians should at all times show their pacific intentions, particularly by suppressing the political forces hostile to the agreements ; whereas in Israel, the extreme right and the settlers have been in the government and engaged in a campaign replete with hatred against the Oslo Agreements. The Palestinians have seen themselves deprived of « goodies » (reinforcement of isolation, suppression of work permits, annulment of VIP cards, refusal to pay duly-signed debts) each time they failed to arrest this or that Islamic leader, suspected rightly or wrongly of being responsible for an attack ; while the Israelis released -if they were arrested at all- notorious murderers of Palestinian civilians.

We have not always understood things the way we should have. On the part of the Israelis, the systematic violation of the signed agreements is not only the result of simple bad faith or sheer dishonesty, but more of an attitude : that of master to pupil, parent to child, prison director to prisoner. In all these cases, the line is drawn to show who has the power, the right and the means to apply it. It is a typically colonial attitude.

Typically colonial as well is the failure to listen to the other. From the point of view of the colonizer, the colonized has no autonomous voice ; neither does he have a real knowledge of reality. Just like a child, it is necessary to let him express himself, convince him about what he is, how he should be, teach him what is right or wrong, tell him what is good for him. This is actually the underlying reason why one does not negotiate : one dictates, one gives. And takes back, to punish. One is pleased when the Palestinians show that they have learned their lessons well and reprimand them if they don't listen. This attitude concerns not only the tough negotiators and the obtuse military, but also the whole Israeli

society, including its leftist intellectuals. This is what the editorial writer of *Haaretz*, Doron Rosenblum, has denounced with irony, as « a didactic style ».

It also explains the limited Israeli capacity for self-criticism facing this century-old conflict. It has never been concerned with the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian relations (racism, colonization...) but with the fact that it has not always shown enough intelligence to understand that it is extremely difficult to impose its position by force alone. Like the good late nineteenth century teachers, it would have been necessary to know how to handle the « stick and the carrot », firmness and gentleness, rewards and punishments.

### **THE NECESSARY REVOLUTION OF MENTALITIES**

But all that is coherent. If peace were synonymous to calm in the class and not the rupture of a master-pupil relationship, everything would only depend on the right way to use the stick and the carrot. But, if, as good sense indicates, peace necessitates relations of reciprocity, equality and mutual respect, a real cultural revolution is needed to move from a state of domination to a state of peace. A revolution of mentalities and behaviour. Such a change cannot be written in a Declaration of Principles and should not be limited to a tight schedule such as that provided in the Oslo Agreements. It demands awareness by the society and its political, intellectual and spiritual leaders. All things that have cruelly lacked in the span of the last decades.

Far from relying on a « process », peace demands an effort, a conscious and determined action to replace the colonial culture of war and domination with a culture of peace.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles in 1993 had inspired much hope. For the first time, Israelis and Palestinians publicly recognized that it was impossible, or at least not desirable, to impose an exclusive

existence in the Holy Land. And they promised to solve their disputes around the negotiating table. Nevertheless, for this declaration of intentions, as its name indicates, to turn into reality, it was necessary to fill a huge deficit : one hundred years of conflict, of colonial relations and of a culture of war. Was it not ambitious, indeed even pretentious to try to fill this deficit in six years ? For the schedule was tight and the objective maximalist : the end of conflict and reconciliation. Nothing less !

For the Israelis, during the major part of this century of conflict between the two peoples, the Palestinians simply did not exist. Wasn't the slogan of Zionism « A land without people for a people without land » ? And in 1973, didn't Golda Meir<sup>3</sup> herself affirm this with the words : « The Palestinians ? No such thing ! » It was at the most an ecological problem which had to be disposed of, like the marshes in the Jordanian valley, the mosquitos and malaria.

« Let the desert bloom. » Another myth, of an arid and deserts land that only Zionism was capable of exploiting, disregarding the fields of olive trees, the terraced hillsides, the prickly pears, which the European, migrating from his native Poland, believed to have fallen straight down from the sky.

From 1948 to 1967, especially after the ethnic purification of 1948, - where more than 700,000 Palestinians were driven off the frontiers of the Jewish state- this total negation of the other became stronger. The Palestinian minority who could stay within the Jewish state represented less than 5% of the country's total population and lived, until 1965, confined in veritable reservations, under the control of a military government which treated it not only as a « fifth column », but especially as a regrettable fatality, an error in a state that desired to be ethnically pure. These 150,000 men and women, who have become a million in 50 years, are, as indicated by Israeli law, the « absent-presents ». They are subject to a quasi-totally arbitrary treatment and the absence of basic human rights – especially the right to land property–

even if, paradoxically, this population enjoys some civic rights.

The occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in June 1967, and the emergence of a strong national movement (PLO) gave a face to the Palestinian people : even if they had to wait more than two decades before this visibility is perceived by the majority of the Israeli population. But, decades of military occupation, of the arbitrary and institutionalized repression, have stained the occupier himself. He developed a culture of more and more openly expressed racism which permitted to justify dehumanizing the other and permanently denying his most basic human rights. The spectacular economic and military empowerment of Israel strengthened its sentiment of superiority, sparing nearly no one.

### **A CONTAMINATED PEACE MOVEMENT**

It was with a real racist mentality and a conquering behaviour that Israel recognized the PLO in 1993 and worked to resolve the conflict in six years.

One could understand that there has been some skepticism for possible positive results of the Oslo negotiations and for the success of the timetable. A strong peace movement in Israel would probably have helped realize the impossible and create a relationship of forces in favor of peace, that includes law, equity and justice. Unfortunately, this too was strongly contaminated by the perverse effects of the occupation and of colonialism, which was basically in agreement with the concept of peace as defended by the country's leaders. A peace which seeks to erase the effects of the occupation and not the occupation as such, which seeks to dispose of Palestinians and not to give them their rights.

And in fact, since the Declaration of Principles was signed, the conception of peace as defended by the great majority of Israeli peace activists appeared with all its weaknesses, as seen in the following excerpts from an « Open Letter to a Friend, in *Peace Now* »

which I wrote in September 1993.<sup>4</sup> It starts with a description of the kind of peace which had filled the Israeli peace activist with joy.

*« You danced in the streets because you were pleased with this peace. And not only with peace but with a mixture of peace, of security, of the Palestinians' having made their « mea culpa » (renouncement of terrorism) and hoping for future concessions from the other side. A peace you could be proud of. A peace for which you were delighted. We did not concede to anything. (« Just a little bit », whispered the Prime Minister) and we have gained a lot: recognition, greater security, the end of the Intifada, the renouncement of terrorism, the easing up of Arab pressure, ...and still more. You are happy with this kind of peace and you invite me to dance in its honor. No thanks ! »*

In fact, for the Israeli peace activist, peace has nothing to do with the Palestinians' obtaining their legitimate rights. It is only a means of ending the effects of the conflict, particularly those concerning him, and not those concerning the occupied population. With such a perspective, it is clear that the less one compromises, the better it is. It is actually a matter of bargaining. You stop fighting in exchange for a military retreat as restricted as possible.

And the letter continues : *« Since I've known you – for 15 years now – you have fought for a peace which was not a value in itself, but a means for us, Israelis, to insure our security. You favor a retreat from the Occupied Territories, but only to insure a Jewish majority in Israel. You demonstrate against Sharon because you worry for the future of the Jewish youth, and you accept to negotiate with the PLO because, otherwise, we would have to negotiate with the HAMAS. As for me, on the contrary, I see peace as an end and not only as a means. I call for a retreat from the Occupied Territories because we do not belong there, even if this occupation cost us nothing, not a victim, not even a cent. And I am against the assassination of children and of adults, for the simple reason that it is*

*forbidden to shoot at children and at civilians. »*

Contrary to such a market conception, the peace we are talking about means putting an end to a longtime denial of rights by Israel, as a matter of principle, and also because it is the only way to put a stop to whatever pushes the Palestinians to pursue their combat, as I had suggested to the person I was writing to. *« Well, what could be better for you than this kind of peace ? You get rid of Gaza, you separate the Israelis from the Palestinians, you leave them the dirty job, and in exchange, you do not even promise them a military retreat or a real state. Could peace be bought at a better price ? For you, the Israeli-Palestinian agreement has always been a game with a zero-score. We shall miss everything that we give them. He wins, I lose. If you were capable of really thinking in terms of peace, you would understand how wrong you have been. The more the Palestinians receive independence and self-respect, the more we benefit from it. The more miserly we are, the more we lose. »*

If we want to create the conditions towards real peace and not just obtain a cease-fire, we cannot be contented with just cutting the cake in two. Or even worse, with reducing the concessions to be made by those responsible for the occupation. What has been taken must be given back completely. The occupied must feel that yesterday's occupier has chosen to change completely his attitude and his objectives.

And the letter ends : *« We have signed the ceasefire agreement and it is just as well. But peace is still far away because peace demands honesty and equality. You want to force them to lie, you want them to capitulate to have peace, you are celebrating a peace between master and slave. Under these conditions, you will probably obtain pacification and tranquility, but not peace. Not until we are ready for a peace between equal partners. »*

Seven years have passed and the whole world can see that Oslo has not generated peace. If the

Declaration of Principles had, for some time, pacified the Occupied Territories, it was, as we can see from the last months' events, merely temporary. Peace and capitulation are actually incompatible, as are peace and domination.

The failure to lend an ear to the other- one of the pre-conditions for a new culture of peace- has particularly been felt in the last 7 years, because the Palestinians have not ceased expressing, in the streets and around the negotiation table, their idea of the essential conditions for an Israeli-Palestinian peace. But, the more security became needed in the field, thanks to the interim agreements signed with the Palestinians, the stronger the illusion among Israelis of a half-priced peace and the certainty that they can impose on the Palestinians a price inferior to that designated in the first phases of negotiations. The refusal or inability to listen to the other has led not only to the deadlock of Camp David but also to great disappointment among the Israeli peace forces, and to their anger against the Palestinians who have refused to dance to the Israeli tune. This is how one finds oneself back to the starting point.

## PEACE-BUILDING

In the Israeli-Palestinian context, a strategy of peace-building is exactly opposed to the idea of « the process ». It needs work at the grassroots, which attacks at the prejudices and actual perceptions, not hesitating to question established interests and existing alliances. Such a strategy turns around five objectives which complete each other.

## EXPOSE THE ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT

This involves, first of all, making the reasons behind each party's hesitations or refusal of peace understood. And showing which are the elements of the kind of peace that each of the two communities aspires at. In other words, the first necessary condition, albeit insufficient, is to show that the conflict is neither a regrettable misunderstanding nor the result of

irrational hatred. Rather, it is the expression of real vested interests and contradictory choices : on the one hand, the colonizing will of Zionism, and, on the other, the aspirations of the Palestinian people for liberty and independence. Behind these eminently political objectives, there are also, and this must be understood, certain behaviours and especially anxieties which are rooted in history and the collective memory of the population. Working for peace consists, first of all, for each community to understand the conduct of the other, by each community. It involves, therefore, a work of information without dishonest compromises : show the other as he really is, even in his hatred, and not as we would want him to be.

### **DEFINING PEACE**

The second objective consists in defining the parameters of the peace we believe in, in such a way that it can be viable and as just as possible. For lack of anything better, these parameters are those of law as defined by international resolutions and conventions. For lack of anything better, since the law is also the result of a certain relationship of forces and not always the expression of full and complete historical justice. It implies the right of refugees to return, the right to self-determination, the total lack of legality which the colonies or the annexation of occupied territories represent. This is the basis of an Israeli-Palestinian peace which could be viable.

### **WORK OF MEMORY AND REPENTANCE**

Thirdly, there is need to create a link between politics and ethics, between law and justice, through responsibility and pardon. Peace is the result of a political compromise which indeed is defined on the basis of law, but remains the result of negotiation. Thus, of a compromise which is rarely symmetrical. Palestinians might readily make compromises in the enforcement of their rights, but they would never accept a peace which would ignore the responsibility for the historical injustice of which they have been victims. First of all, it is important

that historians and educators demystify the story of the formation of the Israeli state and redefine it. But, then again, this does not deal only with history. Politics cannot ignore the need to return to the past and to ask for pardon.

Because there will be no reconciliation if Israel, its leaders and its population do not recognize the injustice committed by them and in their name, against the Palestinian people. And without asking for pardon. It not only concerns a moral debt to be paid to the victims for more than a century's colonization and plunder. It also involves the necessity for the Israeli people to understand the roots of the conflict. And they can follow the example of generosity, not of their leaders, but of the Palestinians who offer a compromise. Peace and reconciliation are incompatible with amnesia. They demand, on the contrary, a re-evaluation of history, and a good look in the mirror, without illusions and concessions. Only a sincere and global apology for crimes committed can create the basis of real equality between the perpetrators of these crimes and their victims. It is an inevitable condition for peace to be the starting point of true reconciliation.

### **EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY**

Working for Israeli-Palestinian peace implies to express in actual and concrete terms, the values on which this peace can lean on to become reality. As we are dealing here with peace between two asymmetrical entities, that is, between a state which is the product of a colonizing movement, and a people that has been its victims, the concept of solidarity becomes a necessary element of mediation between the present, characterized by repression and domination, and the future, which would consist in respect and equality.

In order to establish a dialogue of peace, the Israeli party must commit itself and recognize its specific responsibility in the current actions of its government. And it should be ready to express its recognition of the rights of the Palestinians through solidarity actions.

### **PROMOTING CO-EXISTENCE**

Finally, working towards the emergence of a culture of peace demands struggling against the philosophy of separation. This philosophy, which is in the heart of the Zionist vision, believes only in ethnically homogeneous entities and as such, is a major obstacle to a real Israeli-Palestinian peace. Israel cannot and should not separate itself from its Arab environment. Its future, if it wants a future of peace, will depend on its willingness to integrate in the region, in a spirit of partnership, reciprocity and equality. A refusal to cooperate will signify continuing and wanting to be an alien and hostile body. This would only provoke the hostility of the Arab world towards the Israeli people.

This revolution which Israel's place in the Arab world would represent, starts of course by a radically different attitude towards the Palestinians, be they Israeli citizens or citizens of a possible Palestinian state. An attitude based on cooperation and no more on ethnic separation, and which ceases to be obsessed by the « demographic menace » which the Palestinians represent.

A concept of citizenship based on « jus solis » and not on ethnic or religious origins would permit to approach fearlessly the question of the right of Palestinian refugees to return.

### **THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S COMPLACENCY**

Making peace progress is not only the task of the actors directly concerned: the Palestinians and the Israelis. This objective also concerns the international community. Indeed, it not only has interests and concerns in the Middle-East, and in particular those interests which can be put to danger by a generalized explosion of violence, with its implications on the whole world. It also involves responsibilities. First of all because it was by an act of the international community that Israel was constituted, and that the

Palestinians were deprived of their land. By taking the decision, in November 1947, to divide Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state, the General Assembly of the United Nations also took on the responsibility of insuring the individual and collective rights of the Jewish and Arab populations.

As far as the Palestinians are concerned, their rights were massively violated: mass expulsions, expropriations, etc. It was to try to repair these effects of the 1947 resolution, which were easily foreseeable, that the United Nations adopted Resolution 195 which demands, among other things, the return of the refugees and the restitution of all confiscated properties. Israel's support to this resolution was even the condition for its acceptance by the UN. Now, nothing has been done about it since. The complacency of the international community before the non-application, by Israel, of the different UN resolutions, and the systematic violation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention, as well as the veritable impunity of the Hebrew state, do not contribute at all to peace. Much to the contrary.

This laxist attitude of the international community, or more precisely of the Western states, can be explained first of all by the guilt feeling of Europe towards the Jewish genocide of the Second World War. It was a Europe that could not or did not want to defend the Jews before Nazi barbarity. For the Occident, the U.S. included, the Zionist solution had in addition the advantage of solving the problem of the Jewish survivors from Eastern Europe, who found themselves outside of the frontiers of the Western world. After having allowed the massacre of the Jews, the West got rid of the problem by sending them to Palestine. And with this, they even

felt that they were doing a good action.

It is with a background of guilt-feelings that the Western states supported not only the creation of a Jewish state, but also its economy and its military force. Without massive international aid, Israel would not have become the power it is today, and probably would not have been able to allow itself to develop hegemonic ambitions in the Middle-East. By continuing to support Israel, even though it has become a real regional outlaw, the international community has become a party to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinians, and to the failure of the peace efforts between Israel and the Arab world.

And it is also rendering bad service to Israel and its people to continually treat them as the spoiled brats of the West, to whom one pardons practically anything...with the hope of obtaining pardon, for the unhappy childhood of their parents. He who really loves must, whenever necessary, designate limits, to whoever he wishes well. And this could mean, at times, having to reprimand him. Otherwise, by dint of spoiling the child and leaving him to do as he likes could lead to his ruin.

This quasi unconditional support of Western countries for Israel is not only the result of history. It is also part of the more or less latent conflict between the North and the South. It is, after all, quite natural that Europe and the United States identify with Israel which, in their eyes, is the expression of progress, of democracy, of modernism, and the legitimacy in whose name they justify their own policies around the world. The Arab world, on the other hand, is identified with fanaticism, terrorism and dictatorship. There is no need, therefore, to bother with details. The glaring illegality of

colonization, the use of missiles against the civilian population, the absence of freedom of worship and movement, are precisely mere details in a conflict where the broad lines are that of the conflict between good and evil, between the North and the South.

The spontaneous identification of the suburban youth<sup>5</sup> with the Palestinian struggle does not spring from atavistic anti-judaism; rather, with the discourse of politicians and especially the coverage by the media, they feel a certain similarity of treatment: they speak of the Palestinians just as they speak of them. Those they see bombed in Ramallah or Beit Sahour are the excluded in the new regional order, just as they are excluded from democracy and prosperity.

Looking back with a critical eye on the new world order, on this new form of Cold War which is neo-liberal globalization, it is essential for the international community to play a constructive role in favor of peace in the Middle East. A new culture of peace is as necessary in Europe as it is in the peripheral regions. And it will come from a change of outlook regarding the other, a demand for solidarity. And by the elaboration of a strategy of co-existence based on equality, respect and cooperation. If such a questioning of the actual world disorder does not happen in the near future, the wars of the South and in particular, the Israeli-Arab conflict, will cross the frontiers and will expand like a layer of flaming oil, from the periphery, into the heart of the metropolis.

*Translated by T. Noval Jezewski et S. Rousset*

<sup>1</sup> Meeting involving Bill Clinton, Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat which resulted in a failure due to the absence of discussions on the more fundamental questions.

<sup>2</sup> The first Zionist Congress, held in Basel in 1897 initiated by Theodor Herzl, stipulated that the « goal of Zionism is to create a home for the Jewish people in Palestine ».

<sup>3</sup> Elected Prime Minister of Israel from 1969 – 1973, she had to resign as a consequence of a court of inquiry held on the lack of preparation of the Israeli army during the war of Kippour.

<sup>4</sup> This letter was published in *News from Within*.

<sup>5</sup> Editor's note : The author gives reference here to the youth in the French suburbs coming from the second generation of immigrants and sympathetic to the launch of the Second Intifada, young people who he had the opportunity to mix with during his visits to France.

## FOI ET DÉVELOPPEMENT

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