TOWARDS PEACE IN PALESTINE

by Yusif A. Sayigh

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What is the peace we are looking for in the context of the Palestine problem? It is obvious that there can be different types of peace, with different ingredients going into the making of each type. According to an old Arabic saying, one can ladle out of the saucepan only what one puts into it. The same is true of peace and the ingredients of the type of peace sought. Therefore it is my purpose to examine with you the dissimilar conceptions of peace which the Israelis and the Palestinian Arabs have and, ultimately, through a process of elimination, to identify the only kind of peace which it is worth our while to think about and work for.

I. BACKDROP TO PEACE

Correct Identification of the Palestine Problem

But for our exploration to be well-designed and productive, we have first to have a clear and correct conception of the nature of the Palestine problem. The first thing to do is to indicate what is not in fact the Palestine problem. By identifying and isolating irrelevancies, we will be able to see the problem as it truly is.

The problem, in essence, is not for us a religious or racial conflict. The Arabs in general, and the Palestinians in particular, have never

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Towards Peace in Palestine

Approved of, or practised, discrimination on grounds of colour, religion, or cultural particularity.

Neither is the problem a quarrel over frontiers between states equal in sovereignty and legitimacy—for Israel in our eyes is not a legitimate political entity, based as it is on usurpation and colonialist occupation. The fact that the war of June 1967 ended in the occupation of certain territories of sovereign Arab states beyond the occupation of the whole of Palestine, should not confuse the issue. To describe this issue as a quarrel over frontiers is to suggest wrongly that some rectification of frontiers would settle the conflict.

Likewise, the Palestine problem is not a mere refugee problem—the refugees are only one aspect deriving from the basic conflict.

Finally, the problem is not even a case of colonialism of the type familiar to the world, like that experienced by India, Tunisia, Indonesia, or the Philippines. Zionist colonialism is a special category, as will become clear shortly.

I am aware of the fact that basically the wrong solutions to the Palestine problem are offered, not through intellectual misunderstanding on the part of outsiders, as much as the unspoken expectation that the weak must eventually accept the solution imposed by the powerful. Nevertheless, there is a wide area within which mistakes can be made by outsiders in their assessment of the relative power of the parties to the conflict, and of how each party views its case and therefore how it defines the irreducible minimum it can accept in a final settlement.

Speaking as a Palestinian Arab, I am concerned that you should have a proper understanding of our case and our credibility. Therefore I want to insure against the possibility of intellectual misunderstanding between us.

In the experience of the Palestinians, misunderstanding is usually the product of insufficient familiarity with the background and facts of the Palestine problem, or of concern with results rather than causes, or with derivative rather than with basic issues. Not infrequently, misunderstanding is the result of confusion engineered deliberately by Zionist propaganda.

Whatever the cause, the suggested solutions based on such misunderstanding are bound to be still-born. It is therefore absolutely essential to go back to fundamentals, and in historical depth, for a proper understanding of the issue. Only thus can the injustices suffered by the Palestinians be fully and correctly assessed, and only with such assessment in hand can the search for a solution be realistic and fruitful.

I do not propose to undertake a thorough and detailed historical investigation for the purpose of establishing that Zionist colonialism represents a premeditated, long-term, ruthless, and tenacious process, which has all along been aided not only by world Zionism but also by imperialism. However, I would like, with your forebearance, to recapitulate for you some of the highlights of the evidence. But first, it is necessary to emphasize that the process of Zionist aggression involves the following:

1. Colonialism of a special nature consisting of settlement in, and claim of ownership of, Palestine by the Zionists;
2. Uprooting of the Palestinian Arabs and depopulation of the country, to make room for more Zionist settlers;
3. Occupation of the country and the transformation of the settler minority into a Jewish settler state;
4. Denial of the political rights of nationhood, self determination, and sovereignty to the Palestinian Arabs; and
5. Continuous, dynamic, and relentless expansionism, first in Palestine itself and later into Arab territories outside Palestine.

"You Can't Make an Omelette Without Breaking Eggs"

Now to the evidence.

While Jewish settlement in Palestine was small-scale and rather haphazard before the First Zionist Congress at Basle in 1897, it became systematic and acquired political objectives thereafter. The Congress defined these objectives by stating: "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law."

More explicitly Theodor Herzl wrote in his Journal at the close of the Congress: "If I were to sum up the Basle Congress in a word—which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly—it would be this:

At Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty, everyone will know it.\textsuperscript{33}

The approach of Zionism was both systematic and ruthless. Immigration and settlement in Palestine proceeded in complete disregard of the wishes and interests of the population of the country. The process of settlement involved from the start racial exclusivity and discrimination against Arab peasants and labourers, in addition to their displacement. Thus, both the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kaemeth) and the Palestine Foundation Fund (Keren Hayesod), which were established in 1907 and 1920 respectively for the purpose of acquiring land and for financing Jewish settlement, made it clear in their statutes and lease and loan contracts that no non-Jews were to be employed on the land or ever to acquire the land in any fashion.\textsuperscript{**}

At the political level, the approach of Zionism can be seen in the energetic efforts of the Zionists with the Ottoman, the German, and the British government to give international legitimacy to their venture.

The words in which the First Zionist Congress and Herzl himself defined the aim of Zionism have a clear, if sinister ring. They go even further than the aim that a European colonial power of the time would have set for itself, inasmuch as Zionism could not tolerate the continued existence of the Palestinian Arabs in their homes and country, whereas a colonial power would have permitted this. May I remind you at this point that in 1918, two decades after Herzl’s words and the inflow of thousands of Zionist settlers, the Jewish community in Palestine numbered only 56,000, out of a total population of 700,000, or a mere 8 percent of the total.\textsuperscript{***}

As far back as 1895, we find Herzl coolly thinking of how to remove the impediment which the existence of the “natives” constituted. The entry of 12 June 1895 in his Complete Diaries is so revealing that it is worth quoting from at length:*

When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefits to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country. The property-owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly. Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us things for more than they are worth. But we are not going to sell them anything back. (p. 88)

The voluntary expropriation will be accomplished through our secret agents. The Company would pay excessive prices. We shall then sell only to Jews, and all real estate will be traded only among Jews. To be sure, we shall not be able to do this by declaring other sales invalid. Even if this did not run counter to the modern world’s sense of justice, our power would not suffice to force it through. (p. 88)

For the voluntary expropriation we shall have to use local sub-agents who must not know that their employer is himself a secret agent who takes instructions from the centralized “Commission for Property Purchases.” These secret purchases must be carried out simultaneously, as upon the pressing of an electric button. Our secret agents, who will appear over there as purchasers on their own account, will receive the signal: Marchez! (go ahead) (pp. 89/90)

If we move into a region where there are wild animals to which the Jews are not accustomed—big snakes, etc.—I shall use the natives, prior to giving them employment in the transit countries, for the extermination of these animals. High premiums for snake skins, etc., as well as their spawn. (p. 96)

\textit{* The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl, Ed. by Raphael Patai (Tr. by Harry Zohn), Vol. II, p. 581.}


Towards Peace in Palestine

Herzl's intentions for the "natives", who happened to be the rightful owners and inhabitants of Palestine were not the ravings of a madman, or an outburst of wishful thinking isolated from the stream of Zionist and Israeli thinking and policy. Herzl's thoughts of 1895 were later echoed in the resolutions of the Basle Congress of 1897, and in a whole series of resolutions and policy statements down to the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948.

In brief, Zionist leaders viewed their mission as the take-over of Palestine and its transformation into a country with a Jewish majority. Because at the time the Arabs constituted a huge majority, and continued to form a 69 percent majority as late as 1948, the Zionists not only repudiated the principle of self-determination and the rule of the majority, but brazenly stated that they could only accept the principle and the rule when they themselves became a majority. Thus in December 1918, the American Jewish Congress asked that the Peace Conference declare that "...there shall be established such political, administrative and economic conditions in Palestine as will assure, under the trusteeship of Great Britain, acting on behalf of such League of Nations as may be formed, the development of Palestine into a Jewish commonwealth..."*

Chaim Weizmann expressed himself more crisply, in stating the Zionist intention as establishing a Palestine that would be "as Jewish as England is English."** And Dr. Eder, the head of the Zionist Commission in Palestine, said in 1921: "There can be only one national home in Palestine, and that a Jewish one, and no equality in the partnership between Jews and Arabs, but a Jewish preponderance as soon as the numbers of the race are sufficiently increased."***

Other serious warnings were frequently flashed on the screen of events between 1917 and 1948; so the British Government (and for that matter the American Government), could not at all claim ignorance of the real intentions of the Zionists. Thus the Biltmore Program emerging from the Conference held in New York in May 1942, called for the immediate establishment in Palestine of a Jewish commonwealth and for unrestricted Jewish immigration and settlement in Palestine under Jewish Agency control.* This Program became official Zionist policy in November 1942.

In fact, thanks to the recent release of American secret documents, we now know that the Zionists had by 1943 adopted an even more ambitious programme than the Biltmore Program. Thus, General Patrick Hurley, then President Roosevelt's personal representative in the Middle East, reported on 3 May 1943 as follows:**

For its part, the Zionist Organization in Palestine had indicated its commitment to an enlarged program for:
(1) A sovereign Jewish state which would embrace Palestine and probably Transjordania;
(2) An eventual transfer of the Arab population from Palestine to Iraq; and
(3) Jewish leadership of the whole Middle East in the fields of economic development and control.

Shortly afterwards, on 22 May 1945 the Jewish Agency asked the British Government that an immediate decision be announced to establish Palestine "undivided and undiminished" as a Jewish state, and that the Jewish Agency be invested with the control of Jewish immigration into Palestine.***

Some months later, in March 1946, I personally had a shattering experience. I was attending the hearings of the Anglo-American Commission of Enquiry into the Palestine Problem, held at the YMCA hall in Jerusalem. Dr. Chaim Weizmann was testifying and he was arguing for the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state. The Chairman then asked him whether he did not take into account the wishes and rights of the Arab majority who insisted on self-determination and would not accept to see Palestine become a Jewish state.


* See Alan Taylor, Prelude to Israel (p. 59) for the details of the Program.
*** Royal Institute for International Affairs, Great Britain and Palestine 1915-1945, pp. 139-140.
Towards Peace in Palestine

Dr. Weizmann's reply, which still rings in my ears, was: "Sir, you cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs." Even more shocking and shattering than the reply itself was the fact that the Commission, to a man, rose to their feet when Dr. Weizmann ended his testimony and left the hall.

Admittedly, the British Government felt compelled every now and then, under the pressure of Arab revolt, to allay Arab fears by stating that it was not the intention of the Government that Palestine should be turned into a Jewish state, or that the Arab majority should turn into a minority.*

We, the Arabs of Palestine, knew all along that these assurances were not sincere. We had facts to prove to us the duplicity of the Government and British-Zionist collusion, and were not therefore fooled by mere words. We have since then been proven right. Indeed, we have no less an authority than Lord Balfour himself to confirm the duplicity and the collusion. Writing in connection with the Balfour Declaration and the Covenant of the League of Nations, he said in a memorandum addressed to the Cabinet in 1919:**

In Palestine, we do not propose to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country... The four Great Powers are committed to Zionism... In my opinion that is right. What I have never been able to understand is how it can be harmonized with the declaration, the Covenant, or the instructions to the Commission of Enquiry... In short, so far as Palestine is concerned, the Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate.

The Balfour Declaration, though unjust and illegal, is the cornerstone of the legal case of the Zionists. Through this Declaration Britain undertook to view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish People, before Britain had even occupied the country. This it did in complete disregard of the wishes and rights of self-determination of the Arabs, who at the time constituted 92 percent of the population. The Jewish community, which then accounted for the remaining 8 percent, owned only about 2.5 percent of the land.* Thus, as Arthur Koestler said, in the Balfour Declaration "one nation solemnly promised to a second nation the country of a third." **

Between Balfour and statehood, the Zionists succeeded, with the support of the Mandatory power, in raising their share of the population from 8 to 31 percent, but their land-ownership rose only from 2.5 to under 6 percent.*** All through it was Zionist policy "...to create facts, to confront the world with these facts, and to build on their foundation"; as Weizmann wrote in his autobiography.****

And today, half a century after the Balfour Declaration, Israel still creates new illegal facts, confronts the world with these facts, and builds on their foundation.

The new facts go beyond annexation, the building of kibbutzim and moshavim on Arab land, or the destruction of Arab houses, sanctuaries, and whole villages. There is an unbroken, continuous thread running through Zionist- and Israeli-created facts. This is the dispossession of the Palestinian Arabs, their uprooting, and the denial of their national rights. The process was gradual and slow during the Mandate, but accelerated into a steamrolling conquest during statehood.

The Zionists, and later the Israelis, created facts through first destroying Arab facts. They squeezed the Palestinians out of land which they had tilled for centuries in order to provide room for colonialist settlers. They emptied our villages and towns in order to fill them with Jewish settlers. They destroyed our continuous existence on our soil in order to create their own.

The Palestinian Continued Reality

There remained one all-important fact Zionism, and later Israel, could not create: the disappearance of the Palestinian people. Half

* Cmd. 1700 (known as the Churchill Memorandum) of 3 June, 1922.
*** Government of Palestine, Village Statistics (Jerusalem, 1945).
**** Weizmann, op. cit., pp. 475/476.
of this people was pushed out of Palestine; the other half is under occupation. But this people still exists. Between 1948 and 1967, while we naively waited for the United Nations to redress the injustice suffered by us, or for the Arab states to liberate Palestine, we did not disturb Israeli facts except briefly and ineffectively. So the Israelis could afford to ignore us almost completely.

But since 1967 and the emergence of the resistance movement, and more particularly since the reawakening of the Palestinians as a community, and the revolutionary transformation of this community in attitudes and determination from a refugee mass into a fighting force, the Israelis have gone to great pains to prove that we are not relevant to the problem, even that we do not exist.

Thus, *Le Monde* of 20 January 1969 had this: “Asked about the role of the Palestinians in any future peace settlement, Foreign Minister Abba Eban said, ‘They have no role to play.’” *Newsweek* of 17 February 1969 carried the following: “Asked whether the Palestinians were not also entitled to their homeland, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol answered, ‘What are the Palestinians?’” Golda Meir, the current Prime Minister, on 8 March 1969 said: “How can we return the occupied territories? There is nobody to return them to.” The *Jewish Chronicle* of 18 April, 1969 published this ruling by the Israeli Military Court at Ramallah: “The Palestinians are not a party to the conflict between Israel and the Arab States.” Finally, Mrs. Meir is reported by the *Sunday Times* of 15 June, 1969 as saying: “There was no such thing as Palestinians. It was not as though there was a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country from them. They did not exist.” Note the past tense in the sentence “they did not exist.” Who were Zionists struggling with, then, from the latter part of the nineteenth century to 1948? Who did the Old Testament Hebrews battle with but the Palestinians?

Such statements represent the intensification of an established Zionist policy. They go beyond “creating new facts” and facing the world with them, to the denial altogether of Palestinian existence.

Why is this?

The continued existence of the Palestinians as a coherent community is an impediment for Zionism and Israel, a thorn in the flesh. The Palestine case cannot be liquidated, the file closed, sealed, and shelved, while the Palestinians claim, and fight for, their national rights. We stand in the way of Israeli peace, the *Pax Hebraica*, which involves acquiescence in the accomplished facts of the moment. We stir the conscience of honest and courageous men and women everywhere. As we have not been physically destroyed, the way other facts have been, so we must be dismissed and denied conceptually at least. Indeed, admission of our existence would lead to admission of our national rights. But admission of these rights casts doubt on the legitimacy of Israel’s claim to Palestine.

Israel’s brutal and callous dismissal of Palestinian facts has meant personal tragedies in addition to the national-political tragedy. The tragedies are both collective and individual—tragedies in terms of flesh and blood: of broken careers; of families dispersed; of hopelessness, poverty, and the indignity of joblessness and relief where healthy and gainful toil should have prevailed; of bitterness and frustration where hope and cheerfulness should have reigned.

These are serious consequences. But we still exist. We eat, marry, work. We are a community of over two and a half million, slightly more numerous than the Jews in Israel. We are up in arms for our national rights, for our unbroken identity. We want our homes in Palestine to provide shelter for our children, and our schools to give them education, and our fields for them to play in. We want our homeland back. There is no better evidence of our reality than our determination to fight for the sake of this homeland, to die for its liberation. We have lost over one thousand men in the field since June 1967. According to the Israelis, over 2,700 of our *fedayeen* are in Israeli prisons; another thousand are in administrative detention for supporting the commandos. And many hundreds of our civilian population have fallen victim to Israeli artillery and napalm in the East Ghor in Jordan. This is all a part of the price we are paying for liberating our land.

II. ISRAELI PEACE: CONSOLIDATION OF COLONIALIST CONQUEST

The Arabs in general have failed to communicate the truth about Palestine clearly and effectively. The Zionists have in addition blocked the emergence of a clear picture of our case. They have done this
Towards Peace in Palestine

through a capable and far-reaching network of propaganda and a clever mixture of commission and omission, of distortion and silence.

But even where there is awareness of the problem among foreigners, there is usually noticeable digression into side issues and non-concern with basic issues. This is often coupled with failure to see the whole Palestine problem in perspective. The Zionists, and frequently well-meaning men and women, would want us to believe that concern with historical perspective is an impediment in the way to a solution, that only if the Palestinian Arabs were to stop looking backwards would all be for the best in the world. Abba Eban, Israel's foreign minister, symbolized this attitude in a motto that was as deceptive as it was catching when he said at the United Nations on June 19, 1967: "Not backward to belligerency, but forward to peace." Obviously enough, he did not stop to explain why the belligerency, and what the peace. It would not have been in his interest to give his audience, and the world, a true picture.

The belligerency, by which word he characterized the attitude and formal posture of the Arabs, was not and is not without compelling cause. The cause is to be found in what I have been describing as the fate of Palestine and the Palestinians at the hands of the Zionists and the Israelis and their imperialist supporters. There was and is belligerency because there was and is Israeli occupation, dispossession, uprooting, and displacement. There is belligerency because Arab Palestinian facts are being destroyed, dismissed, or denied through sheer force, in violation both of justice and law, to make room for the new facts of conquest.

Conquest and colonization call for liberation. One cannot move straight from occupation to peace without first going through liberation. Otherwise, the peace would be a peace based on conquest, designed to perpetuate conquest and to legitimize it.

The Content of Israeli Peace

This brings us to a description of the peace to which the Israelis invite us. First, let us identify those invited to this peace. They are the Arab states, not the Palestinians. We are not involved; we have no role to play; indeed we do not exist, according to Israeli leaders. But let us forget about protocol and the style of the invitation:

let us look at what is being offered. We find that there is not a clear-cut single concept of peace that the Israeli leaders suggest. There are, to begin with, the proponents of the Greater Israel idea who believe that the state of Israel should include not only the whole of Palestine, but also areas east of the River Jordan, more territory in Syria than that now occupied, all of South Lebanon, and Sinai. In short, an even larger Israeli empire than the present one.

Other leading Israelis, of whom several are in the cabinet, offer peace on the basis of Israel holding on to the whole of Palestine, plus the Golan Plateau, plus part of the Sinai Peninsula. Then the so-called "moderates" or doves in the cabinet offer us a peace which involves the retention by Israel of parts of the territories occupied in June 1967, particularly East Jerusalem, areas in the West Bank for security and historical reasons, the Golan Plateau, and a strip connecting South Negev with Sharm al Shaikh in Sinai. The fate of the Gaza Strip is left vague. At the end of March 1970 Mrs. Meir added Hebron to the list of areas to be annexed according to her concept of peace.

Next, there are some Israelis, none of whom is in government, who favour a complete evacuation of the territories occupied in June 1967 and the admission of a modest portion of pre-1967 refugees to the area of Palestine occupied in 1948.

There is only one very tiny group of Israelis, the Israeli Socialist Organization (Matzpen), who courageously struggle against the Zionist state structure. According to Dr. Machover, a leading member of Matzpen, "The creation of a binational state, or simply of one common state, where all ethnic and religious discrimination would be banned whoever was in the majority, is the only goal which corresponds to the needs of a durable peace and progress in the area."

The content of each of these types of peace except the last makes of the peace offered a cruel farce, against the backdrop of occupation and dispossession. Indeed, whether we take a very pessimistic or a less pessimistic attitude, the Israeli peace offered us is no less than unconditional surrender to a Pax Hebraica according to which the Palestinians and the millions of neighbouring Arabs would fall inside

III. UNITED NATIONS PEACE: SHORT-TERM APPROACH, LONG-TERM TROUBLE

The United Nations too have lost credibility. Over the years they have come up with many recommendations, resolutions, or plans, which were offered as a contribution towards the solution of the Palestine problem. Invariably, what has been offered has ignored the heart of the matter, the national right of the Palestinian Arabs to sovereignty in their homeland. No United Nations effort at a solution reflects enough historical depth, or comprehensiveness of angle and outlook, to be satisfactory. And, in any case, Israel has invariably and consistently flaunted United Nations resolutions, even though they only gave the Arabs partial and very modest satisfaction.

If I were to single out the one major factor to blame for the failure of the United Nations and for the arrogant defiance of Israel, it would be the overwhelming influence of the United States Government at the United Nations and the whole-hearted support of this government for Zionism and Israel. The explanation of this phenomenon is to be found in the extraordinary strength of Zionism among United States Jews, and the extraordinary strength of United States Jews in United States politics. The U.S. Government’s claim of “even-handedness” in its dealings with Israel and the Arabs is a mini fig-leaf that is as convincing as it is protective.

It is necessary at this point to look closely at the most comprehensive attempt by the United Nations to provide a settlement for the Palestine problem. I refer to the Security Council resolution of 22 November, 1967. This resolution is unacceptable to us Palestinians. We reject the claims made for it as a solution to the Palestine problem, for the following reasons:

1. The resolution deals only with the occupation of 1967, leaving standing the occupation of 1948. Such a slicing of history is arbitrary and indefensible. It means that the Zionist occupation of a part of Palestine has become respectable because it is now 22 years old, but that the 3-year old occupation is not yet respectable. The passage of time makes an occupation respectable and therefore acceptable in the eyes of the world, only if nobody fights to achieve liberation. We are fighting and will continue to struggle for the liberation of the whole of
Palestine. We refuse the position that occupation improves through ageing, like wine;

2. The resolution deals with only half the Palestinian community, namely those who lived in 1967 in the Gaza Strip and the “West Bank.” The other half will not be enabled to exercise the right of self-determination in any true sense—in the sense of being able to exercise sovereignty;

3. The resolution not only fails to recognize the nationhood and right of sovereignty of the Palestinian people, but it legitimizes Israel’s existence and seeks to obtain our signature and seal to a confirmation of Israel’s legitimacy; and

4. The resolution does not provide a realistic solution to the Palestine problem because it does not provide a formula acceptable to the Palestinians—the party first and foremost involved. It leaves our needs unfulfilled. It takes a short-term view of the whole issue, and thus can only breed long-term trouble.

IV. PALESTINIAN PEACE: A JOINT VENTURE INTO A NEW SOCIETY

The Content of Palestinian Peace

If Israel’s peace means the consolidation of the Zionist colonialist conquest of Palestine, and if United Nations peace in fact legitimizes Israel’s illegitimate occupation and provides only marginal and short-term palliatives, the peace which the Palestinian Arabs offer is one of liberation, justice, and intercommunity cooperation. It would liberate Palestine from Zionist occupation, and would liberate Palestinian Jews from the brutalization of Zionism.

Specifically, our vision is the setting-up of Palestine in its entirety as one sovereign state in which Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian Jews, whether practising Moslems, Christians, Jews, or atheists, can live together as equal citizens regardless of religion, colour, or race. For the Palestinian Jews opting for the proposal, this would mean identifying with Palestine and with its Arab environment and therefore shedding Zionist colonialist and expansionist attitudes. For the Palestinian Arabs, it would mean accepting the Jewish community and cooperating with it in democratic and progressive conditions—and this for the first time since the Balfour Declaration in 1917, when the large-scale and systematic invasion of the country began.

This is a vision of a new society in Palestine, where the members would build and live together, would interact and mutually adjust to each other’s idiosyncracies, and would give themselves the opportunity to create a multi-religious though non-sectarian progressive society which is a fitting destiny for a country like Palestine.

What is very significant about the Palestinian solution is that it is not only the kind of thing which the Palestinians at large are advocating, but more particularly what the fighters are offering and fighting for. It is not material for propaganda for the consumption of foreign audiences, or a tactic, but an earnest, sincere vision of the future for the realization of which the commandos are willing to sacrifice their lives.

It might be argued at this point that the Arab and Jewish communities, used to violence and mutual mistrust for so long, would be unable to live together. True, it would be very difficult to live together at the start. But we would like all reasonable people to ask themselves which would be better: for the two communities to continue fighting in the battlefield for the next two or three decades, or for them to learn how to live together for the next two or three decades?

Of course there are bound to be many practical questions in your minds. How is government to be shared? Can the country be cantonized, or will it have to be centrally run? What is the social system to be adopted? How and where are the one and a half million Palestinian Arabs now outside Palestine to be accommodated? What is to happen to Jews living on Arab land and in Arab homes? These and other questions have to be answered; but not yet. One thing we can right away establish: if our basic idea is accepted, then all the derivative questions can be handled; none of them is beyond the ingenuity of man to deal with.

You might also complain that our vision is idealistic. We maintain that it is so, but not unrealistic. There is nothing shameful about idealism. Indeed, history’s greatest events and movements began as a vision in the eye of some idealist. We make no apology for our vision of a just peace.
Consider the alternative to this peace. It would be a protracted struggle for decades to come, involving the diversion of precious human and material resources to the military establishment on both sides of the conflict. It would mean destruction, social and psychological distortion, deepening bitterness and callousness, brutalization all round.

The implications would be even grimmer for the Israelis than the Arabs. Israel is currently directing 25 percent of its Gross National Product, or 40 percent of its budget, into the war effort—apart from allocations that are disguised under other headings. Like all colonial powers, Israel is already experiencing strain and creeping moral deterioration. Even Ben Gurion, himself a hardened colonialist, is now worried about Jewish society and character.

Israel is a tough Sparta, among neighbours who have not recently proved very warlike. But Israel can neither have an insurance policy against the hardening of Arab fighting will and improved military performance, nor will it for long enjoy a copyright on fighting skills. If only in self-defence, we too will have to turn ourselves into so many Spartas if we are to free ourselves of the dehumanizing bondage to fear and servitude.

Some Contrasts

This is the bleak picture of the future if Palestinian peace is rejected. I invite you now to contrast the peace we offer with the peace of the Israelis. Ours finds room both for Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian Jews; theirs squeezes the Arabs out. Our peace is non-discriminatory; theirs is racialist. Ours is based on mutual accommodation and compromise; theirs in essence is a peace dictated by the colonialist/victor. Ours confers rights and imposes obligations on Arabs and Jews alike; theirs denies not only our rights but our existence as well. Ours frees Arabs and Jews alike from self-centeredness; theirs is totally exclusivist. Ours is a revolutionary joint venture in the building of a new society in the whole of Palestine; theirs is an anachronistic possessive sole ownership which by forcing us out, can only establish a settler society on usurped property. Because of being colonialist, by definition their peace cannot be truly democratic and progressive.

Palestinian Peace A Major Concession

One point in particular needs emphasis. This is that the solution and peace we offer contain a huge concession on our part. In inviting the Palestinian Jews to build the new state and society jointly with us, we are inviting a large community most of whose members came to our country by force against our will. We make this concession because of our recognition of the fact that a large Jewish community is already in Palestine and because of our desire to seek mutual accommodation with it. The new, revolutionary Palestinians do not subscribe to any theory or notion of uprooting or expulsion. We are not Zionist. Our revolution is positive.

I emphasize this point because there is an erroneous use of terms here when pro-Israelis maintain that Israel will be making concessions in taking back some refugees or in evacuating some occupied territory. This is truth turned upside-down.

Because we make the maximum concession that can legitimately be expected of us, and because the content of our solution embodies our minimal national demands, we cannot be asked to give up anything more. Furthermore, it must by now have become clear that we cannot negotiate with Israel within the framework of victor/vanquished, nor the framework of established facts, starting from the Zionist dictum “Israel is here to stay”. Such negotiation would pre-empt the search for a true and lasting peace, and would perpetuate our relative roles: Israelis in colonialist possession; we dispossessed and in exile. This is why it must be clear that Israel’s conciliatory statements of its declared willingness to negotiate are empty statements and that its willingness is deliberately sterilized in advance.

When Israel starts from and maintains the position of colonialist occupation, there remains nothing we as Palestinians can negotiate about. Even when Israel invites the Arab governments to negotiate, but goes on to declare most points non-negotiable, one wonders what it is that is left for negotiation—is it the weather or the colour of the negotiators’ eyes? In all this, Israel relies heavily on the pre-emptive strike—be this military or political. Politically, its pre-emptive strike consists of the creation in the occupied territories of Israeli “new facts,” which then become part of the status quo and non-negotiable. This has been the pattern of policy and action all along since the Basle Zionist Congress in 1897.
Four Tests of Palestinian Peace

I owe it to you now to examine the Palestinian solution for peace in order to see if it truly possesses the qualities and advantages I have claimed for it. I will therefore put it to the test against four touchstones.

First, advantage to Arab and Jew alike. The proposed solution would be advantageous to the Jewish community and not merely to the Palestinian Arabs. For the Jews, it would at last provide both a sense of belonging and of being accepted. The purpose of Jewish immigration into and settlement in Palestine has always been the search for refuge and a haven, but this has all along been attempted against the will of the Palestinian Arabs. The result, in rejection and in violence, is too well-known to be retold.

Supporters of the statehood of Israel might argue that only if the Jews have a state of their own, and a strong one at that, can they feel secure and free of the fear born of centuries of persecution and discrimination. The fallacy of this notion needs little effort to lay bare. For over half a century now the Zionists have been trying to force their way into Palestine. All along there has been rejection and violent resistance. Neither their strong allies in Mandate days, nor their strong army and allies since statehood, have assured them the peaceful haven and life sought. Nor will they assure them that in the future. The only assurance is acceptance by the Palestinians.

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The second touchstone is the fairness of the proposal to the Jews, apart from its fairness to the Palestinian Arabs. It is enough in this connection to say that the proposal would provide a home for all the Jews in Palestine who choose to live in peace and dignity with the Arabs, although most of them have come to the land against our will.

Yet we are willing to overlook this fact if the Palestinian Jews are willing to free themselves from colonizing Zionism and to identify with the new Palestine. This, for the first time since 1917, would enable them to interact culturally and economically with the Palestinian Arabs and with the Arabs beyond. Such interaction ought to be contrasted with the ghetto and boycott conditions in which the Israelis now live.

The third touchstone is the long time-horizon of the solution. This solution has the great advantage of durability. None other will be acceptable by us, because no other solution provides us with the absolute minimum of our national demands and guarantees a minimum of our national interests. Therefore no other proposal can have more than short-term durability. But is anything but a long-term solution worth working, even fighting, for?

This brings us to the fourth touchstone, realism. At first glance it would seem that if the Palestinian Arabs were realistic they would accept whatever Israel was willing to offer, since the June 1967 war has revealed the extent of the military gap between Israel and ourselves, Palestinians and other Arabs alike. But a closer look would indicate that, on the contrary, it is the Israelis who are not being realistic and whose shortsightedness and drunkenness with power will be self-defeating in the long run. For, what ought to be considered is not the relative power of the two parties today, but what it will be in ten or fifteen or even thirty years from now.

Realism is an absolute concept unrelated to a time-horizon. What may sound ridiculously unrealistic today may be perfectly feasible in X years. It would be dangerously shortsighted to think merely of the coming two or three or five years, if the Arabs at large refuse to adopt this short a time-horizon, and choose to adopt the form of a popular war of liberation in the confrontation with Israel, instead of a war of regular armies exclusively. Therefore it is with a long-term future that intelligent, sober Israelis, Zionist Jews abroad, and Gentile Zionists should concern themselves.

The contention that penetrating long-run realism would support the position we take is based on three premises. The first is the social, economic and technological advances which the Arab world at large is making and in which the Palestinian Arabs share fully. Only the most ignorant would deny this, and only those with a racist attitude would maintain that the Arabs do not have the inherent capabilities that will make them advance like the Italians, the Turks, the Mexicans, or the British for that matter.

The second premise is the shock effect Israel's aggressiveness and expansionism are having on the Arabs generally. The awareness is growing that the menace of Israel's superior military power is not merely one of territorial occupation and terrorization within the limits and on the scale we witness today. There will be more school children killed, more factories destroyed. And there will also be pressure to
spread Israeli control even further through intimidation, with the aim of squeezing the outlying parts of the Arab world inside the sphere of influence of the Israeli empire which itself would include those Arab territories actually under occupation.

This would be the fate of the Arab world if Israel's might is not checked and counterbalanced, and the Arabs see this terrifying picture develop before their very eyes. They see it in the fate of the dispossessed Palestinians; in the hundreds of East Jordanians napalmed in the Ghor and Ibed areas, in the hundreds of thousands of East Jordanians, Syrians, and Egyptians displaced and turned refugee in their own country; in the Suez Canal towns destroyed and depopulated; in the 100 corpses of Abu-Zaabal factory workers in Egypt and the 46 corpses of little elementary school children at Bahr al Baqar for whom the United States Phantom became a reality of mass slaughter.

The shock effect is beginning to manifest itself in the Arab world in a number of ways. I would like to single out the deep and searching self-assessment and self-criticism that has come out in a large number of essays, plays, editorials, and in general conversation. Even permeating the political fumbling in Arab summit and Arab League meetings, there is an under-current of dissatisfaction with the conditions of the Arabs and a search for answers in the various fields of thought and action.

The third premise is the emergence of the Palestinian revolution and the effect it is having not only on the Palestinians themselves, refugee camp dwellers and successful businessmen alike, but also on the Arabs at large.

I have presented my model of realism in opposition to the model which is based on a shortsighted assessment of the pattern of power distribution between the parties in confrontation. But I do not at all mean to suggest that we cherish the prospect of a violent, destructive use of our great potential. We would much rather turn this potential to the development of our society and the welfare of its individual members. Only because Israel continues to disregard our rights and to block our normal existence do we want to translate a large part of our actualized potential into violence in order to protect our interests and our right to life and security.

**Beneficiaries of Palestinian Peace**

In discussing Israeli peace, I identified the parties to whom Israel addresses its peace offers and the content of what is offered. We have already described the content of Palestinian peace. So now we should identify its beneficiaries.

In general terms, the world at large and the region as a whole would benefit, with its Arab, Jewish and other communities. Insofar as the Israelis are concerned, we include in our vision all the Jews who are liberated of Zionism and are willing to identify with Palestine and to consider themselves Palestinian. We set no time limit for this. The Palestine Liberation Organization and all the leading commando groups—Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Sa'iqa, the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine—have made themselves clear beyond doubt on this point. While we insist on the undoing of the political structures of the state of Israel, inasmuch as they are colonialist structures, we welcome all the Jews of Palestine who identify with our vision of the new society.

Recently this point has raised controversy. Unable to attack the idea of the new society which we are advocating, the Zionists have started a far-reaching and concerted campaign aimed at discrediting our intentions. The campaign was launched in the press, through the mailbox, and over the radio. The anchor to the Zionist argument has been Article 6 in the Palestine National Charter (drawn up in 1964 and amended in July 1968), which defines a Palestinian Jew as one who was in Palestine at the start of the invasion, and his descendants.

There are two points of significance in this connection. To begin with, it was the liberation fighters, not the dreamers or the political scientists among us, who had the vision of the new society. The fighters have indeed proved to be the most reasonable among the Palestinians and the most visionary as well. It is they who have gone much beyond Article 6 in not setting a past date for the eligibility of Jews to citizenship of the democratic state of Palestine, but in welcoming all the Jews who care to stay as Palestinians without divided loyalty.

The second point of significance is that the Sixth Palestine National Assembly held in September 1969 was concerned about the in-
compatibility of Article 6 with the aims of the Palestinian revolution. Because amendments to the National Charter have to conform to certain time limitations, the amendment of Article 6 had to be left to a subsequent meeting. The Assembly asked its President to entrust the drafting of the amendment to a special committee, and this is where the matter formally stands today.

But this is not where it effectively stands. More important than any article in the Charter is the will of the men and women who make or unmake charters, who have ideals and fight for these ideals. These men and women have outgrown the Charter, and today embody a more liberal vision than that which the Charter defines.

The Morality of Making War for Making Peace.

The Palestinian armed struggle raises two questions: first, the credibility of our force; and secondly, the morality of making war.

With regard to credibility, I would like to confess straight away that I am no military strategist or expert. But I am I believe a normal Palestinian with a reasonable amount of common sense and a reasonable degree of knowledge of the realities of the Arab world. I am also fully aware of Israel’s present superiority in terms of military power, technology, organization, and leadership. What then gives our expressed determination to fight more meaning than desperate, suicidal bravado?

The starting point for my confidence is the determination of the Palestinians not to melt away, but instead to fight on and to bear sacrifices for asserting and recapturing their national rights. This determination is not theoretical or hypothetical. We see it in everyday life and action—from the simple willingness to contribute money to the cause, to the willingness to forego job and career in order to work with the resistance movement, to the willingness to bear arms and fight and, if necessary, die. And we have enough past evidence of the determination. Our struggle against Zionism is already over half a century old, and there is no good reason to doubt that it can continue for many more years, if needs be.

Then there is the social and psychological transformation of the Palestinians. The men and women in the refugee camps, and the refugees outside camps, are not what they were. Not only have they acquired a new dignity and a new sense of direction and purpose, but many of their deep-ingrained values and attitudes are changing with the speed of a social revolution. The best single illustration is the dramatic transformation in the position of women. The sheltered daughters and sisters of yesterday, whose merest contact with men used to be severely frowned on, now spend most of their time side by side with young men, training, camping, travelling and fighting.

The will of the Palestinians to fight is crystallizing. Their involvement is deepening all the time. Their participation is concrete and growing. They have an important enough cause to electrify them into action. They have talent and capabilities. The number of holders of university degrees among the Palestinians is about 60,000. In the United States, Canada, and Western Europe alone there are over 1,500 Palestinian professors and practising physicians, engineers, and scientists. And the fighters themselves are a true cross-section of the Palestinian community. Professionals and university students stand side by side with peasants, labourers, craftsmen, and clerks. And women are joining in ever increasing numbers.

We do not claim that our resistance movement and guerilla activities have developed into a popular war of liberation yet; but we are moving in that direction. The guerillas are the vanguard of a broad liberation movement. Resources are not lacking. Palestinians and their Arab brothers show no sign that they will let the revolution in the future go short of resources.

Or of men. There are more Arabs eager to join the commando organizations than there is room for at the present stage of the struggle. And, of great significance, is the leavening effect of these Arab men and women in their own countries. Gradually, the stiffening will of the Arabs at large, and their determination to take part in the fight, is creating deepening involvement and participation. The Arab peoples are becoming a protective belt around the Palestinian revolution. Soon the Palestinian liberation movement and revolution will be transformed into an Arab movement and revolution. And, therefore, the Arab governments will all have to hammer out their policies and their actions in harmony with the requirements of the war of liberation.

We are aware of the fact that the Arab regular armies are no match today for the advanced Israeli military machine. But we also
know that major strides are being taken towards improving the level of military readiness—in combat training, in the air, in artillery, but above all in the reshaping of the relations between officers and men and in motivation.

In the meantime, the Palestinians buy time for the armies; we are a first defence for them. And, what is specially significant here, the technological gap between the Israeli and the Arab war machines is not nearly as relevant in a war of liberation. Vietnam has provided the best illustration of the theory that an irregular war is the appropriate war for the underdeveloped society. Within the framework of the war of liberation, and given our intensified motivation and determination, our numerical superiority which until now has been a cause of dangerous complacency, can become a critical contributive factor in our struggle.

We are proud and appreciative of the warm support we are getting from beyond the Arab world. Liberation movements, revolutionary students, workers, churchmen, and progressive factions in established parties known for their traditional sympathy for Zionism are beginning to understand our cause better and to express their solidarity with us. It would be a mistake to underestimate this support because it has no Phantom planes or Centurion tanks to back it. It stiffens our determination to fight, which is the greatest weapon of all on our side.

At this point, you might ask why we talk so much about war if we are honest about our proposed solution and our vision of peace in Palestine. This raises the whole question whether liberation can take place through persuasion. I do not know of any case where a people whose land had been occupied succeeded in liberating it through presenting a good and convincing argument. Alas, this is not how our real world functions—nor are the world's issues determined the way we are in a debating club.

Of course, if the Israelis were to declare their willingness to dismantle their settler state and to accept our proposal for the establishment of Palestine as a democratic state for both our communities, there would be no more need for armed struggle. But the Israelis have not indicated any such willingness; nor are they likely to. Hence the Palestinian revolution, and the fight for liberation. Only through fighting can we make it increasingly and prohibitively costly for the Israelis to close their ears to our just demands, to reason, and to their own long-term interests alike. Unhappily, it is the gun that gives credibility to the olive branch.

We are left with no other recourse or manner of redress but to fight. Thus our fight for liberation is not only necessary and justified, given the nature and dimensions of the injustices inflicted upon us; it is moral. For, the just war we are fighting is totally aimed at the building of a meaningful and lasting peace. It is aimed at destroying a structure and an ideology which are as dangerous as they are oppressive and unjust, in order to build a new society with new positive values for both Palestinian Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Hence the morality of our making war in order to make true and lasting peace.

CONCLUSION

In closing, I want to leave you with a few simple thoughts. To truly understand the Palestine problem, you have to see it in context, in historical perspective, inside a system of values based on justice as its foundation stone. The Zionist/Israeli position is based on another system of values and uses another system of logic in explaining itself. It is the logic of the sword, of the accomplished fact of conquest.

We must remember that the sword has two sides. But whereas Israel uses the sword to usurp and to commit aggression, and to consolidate its gains, we use it to defend ourselves and to liberate. Israel uses the sword to end the diaspora of the Jews, but also to create a new diaspora for the Palestinian Arabs. We use it to end our own diaspora but without wanting to inflict a new one on the Jews. Whereas they want to exist as a community in our land through destroying our community, we want to reinstate our community in its homeland but without destroying theirs. Their vision is of two communities mutually exclusive, mutually negatory; ours is of two mutually accommodating communities, complementing each other, cooperating in a new society.

Now you have before you the Zionist/Israeli vision of the future, and you have the Palestinian vision. Which is the vision worthy of your hopes and of your support?