

OCCUPIED PALESTINE:
IS A NONVIOLENT SOLUTION POSSIBLE? *

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You may rightly ask: what right does a Western European, and even a Norwegian, very far removed from the Middle East, at present living in North America, have to talk about this subject at all? So let me state from the very beginning that I am not going to be apologetic about this. I am a world citizen, so are you: we are tied together in a most complex web of cultural relationships and structural interaction--your fate is mine, my fate is yours, humankind is one. And the Middle East time bomb is ticking--we want nobody "taking us with them."

One particular expression of this is the dramatic asymmetry found in Western Europe and North America, and indeed also until recently in my own country, with regard to the occupation of Palestine. As has been pointed out by Dr. Ayoub in this conference: there is a sympathy with the Jewish cause, understandable in the light of Holocaust. But there is so little genuine sympathy with the Palestinian cause, at least not until Sabra-Chatila, the massacre of Palestinians in the two refugee camps, related to the Israeli invasion June 1982. And I might add to this: the underlying texture of bias is so deep that even Sabra-Chatila is now to some extent washing out, if not in the younger generation in Western Europe and North America so at least among the middle-aged and the older, and more entrenched minds.

What is at the roots of all of this? I shall try to answer, going back to my memories from early childhood, at school, to try to see what kind of impressions I received--with millions of others.

First, and very basic: Judaism as the background for christianity, the Old Testament as a part of The Book as received by Christians. All of us at school learned the map of Palestine, in two connections. Partly in connection with the Old Testament as a part of the history of the Jewish people, and mainly, of course, as a way of relating the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who was to become the Christ to concrete geography. Nothing similar was ever taught about the third occidental religion, the third religion of the Book in the sense of the kitab, the Old Testament: Islam. Rather, Arabs, a concept too easily equated with Islam, were seen as living in the desert, not in "real" countries. In short, the sterotype of all Arabs being Beduins prevailed. The equation was not quite Islam=Beduins, but not too far from that either.

Second, Judaism was seen as the precursor to Christianity, meaning that Jewish myths were accepted up to the point of the Jewish rejection of Christ as The Messiah. The most important of those myths, the idea of the Jews as a Chosen People with a Promised Land, Eretz Israel, was accepted. This was a part of the Covenant between the Jews in the Diaspora; another being that precious gift, according to Christians, given to humanity: The Ten Commandments. Of course, Jews as a Chosen People with a Promised Land is not a part of the Christian faith; the Ten Commandments are. But this essential part of Judaism is easily accepted, or at least not rejected as a part of a history seen as a necessary condition for the emergence of "our" Christianity. At this point it should be remembered that the

Covenant was entered with the use of Moses as an intermediary between people on the one hand and the only God, Yahweh on the other. Yahweh later became the God of the Christian faith, with monotheism somewhat diluted through the addition of a christology. Necessary if not sufficient conditions of Christianity, impossible to reject in their entirety.

Third, enters Islam. There are a number of factors at this point that would predispose Christians against Islam, and the factors are as relevant today as more than 1300 years ago, since A.D. 622 as Christians would say. Thus, Islam was to Christianity what Buddhism was to Hinduism: a refreshing renewal, and a simplification. Islam has been characterized as Christianity without christology. Here is the critical point because it is precisely in the christology that the most dogmatic elements of Christianity are enshrined: virgin birth, miracles, resurrection in carnis, and vicarious death. Why should Muslims have this luxury--belief in a God and in one God only, without having to accommodate to dogmas with which christians have been laboring for nearly 2000 years? Should Muslims get away that easily, and in addition direct an accusing finger at their cousins in Christianity! Judaism was a necessary parent; Islam a totally unsolicited, abrasive offspring.

Fourth, and this is probably the most important reason: Islam was a success. Judaism was and is limited to Jews. Moreover, the Promised Land is no threat to the Christian mainland in Europe and the Americas. Islam expanded at an incredible rate under the Omayyads, although much of the expansion took the form of

filling a vacuum because the Persian and the Byzantine empires had exhausted each other in their many battles. Like Christianity Islam was a universal religion, meaning that the two were headed for conflict. When Pope Urban II launched the clarion call in 1095, in Clermont, to wrest the Holy Sepulcher from "the wicked race" the following was immediate, and the Crusades were launched.

Christian wickedness and self-righteousness took the form of crusades against the Muslims, and I am not at all sure that we have seen the last crusade. And it took the form of pogroms and anti-semitism in general against the Jews and I am not at all sure that we have seen the last pogroms. In 1258 Hulagu, the Ilkhan from Mongolia sacked Baghdad, at that time a major center of learning, killing more than one million people, men and women, old, middle-aged, young, children and babies, but spared the Christians. He had made an agreement with the Byzantine Christian Emperor, and the Pope even addressed him as "Your Serenity." ¹

I think this is important as an example of how the Muslims had been appointed arch-enemy--not the remote (geographically and religiously) Monogolians. As an aside: I am afraid this may happen again. We may see US-Soviet friendship with Islam as the common enemy; like we got, for some period, US-Chinese friendship with the Soviet Union as common enemy. Communism and "scientific atheism" notwithstanding, Russia is still an Orthodox Christian country.

Fifth: Islam continues its expansion, and under the Ottomans even hammers, 1683, at the gates of Vienna, in the heartland of Europe--and they stay. Turkey becomes the major scare--and remained so until well after the Ottoman Empire had collapsed. Islam=Beduins + Turks. Turkey remains the scare, well beyond the end of the Ottoman Empire.

Loaded with assumptions such as these, I arrived for the first time in Gaza, Palestine, in January 1964, a cold night, by train from Cairo. There was nowhere to sleep. The train had arrived too late so I was put up by the station master, a very gentle person who had once been the station master at a considerably bigger place in Palestine. We spent the night discussing the whole issue, and I came out with the three arguments most commonly heard in Western Europe and North America in defense of the current Israeli Occupation:

- The whole territory actually belongs to the Jews, as is also stated in the Old Testament;
- The Jews have suffered so horribly, unspeakably in connection with the Holocaust so they certainly deserve a homeland;
- The Jews have made the desert bloom.

I got very good answers to all three, and have since that been an unswerving adherent of the Palestinian cause, as I think can be seen from my article written in 1971, "The Middle East and the Theory of Conflict" (also printed in the Journal of Palestine Studies, and translated into Arabic, but not into Hebrew.)²

However, I also believe that the conflict in this area is not one between right and wrong but between right and right. My position would be that Jews have a right to live in this area, but not to form an independent state on what is essentially Arab soil.

I shall come back to this point later, well knowing that this is a highly contentious issue.

Before I now address the real issue, how to struggle non-violently for a just solution of the Palestinian issue, two more anecdotes seem to me highly relevant.

Summer 1967 I was for the second time in what was then still called Rhodesia, doing some research on the impact of the economic sanctions that were launched after Ian Smith made his UDI, Unilateral Declaration of Independence, November 1965. I came across the security chief of Ian Smith, and we of course discussed "the situation". He told me that in his opinion they were capable of handling any kind of guerrilla action, since this could be done with a combination of police and military methods. His problem, however, I now quote, would be if "they start marching, thousands, tens of thousands of them, from the townships, on Salisbury. There is simply no way in which we could stop them, not because of lack of force on our side, but we would not have the nerves to start shooting on an unarmed population". Needless to say, even the day after I contacted my friends among the Africans and told them about this. I was rebuffed by very courageous people in the guerrilla movement telling me that this would be a woman's way of fighting. Not acceptable, for socio-cultural reasons.

The second story comes from New Delhi, fifteen years later, fall 1982, in a party where a very high ranking Indian police officer was

also present. I asked him about the relationship between Sikhs and Hindus, and he told me that in his mind this was no problem as long as they made use of violence. Indian police could handle that with traditional police methods. But, again I quote, "if all four million of them should march unarmed on New Delhi in a totally nonviolent demonstration we would be at a loss". And again the same thing repeated itself. I told this to some of my friends among the Sikhs, and they showed me not only their hair-knot under the turban but also the knife in their clothes. The message added up to a very simple one: nonviolence is not in our culture!

And now back to the Palestinian situation. Let me first share with you my vision of the Zionist goals. I am in no doubt what they are: to get the Arabs out of the West Bank, possibly also Gaza, as many as possible of the 1.3 million, the absorption capacity of Israel being limited, especially now that the 650 thousand Palestinians living inside the green line are becoming more politically conscious. In other words, complete inclusion of the occupied territories into the State of Israel. Then, added to this: a transformation of Jordan from a Hashemite Kingdom to a Palestinian state, thereby transforming the relationship between Arabs and Jews from an intra-state relationship to an inter-state relationship with standard techniques of arms race, arms control, balance of power, and "strategic studies" from the intellectual point of view. Deideologization. I am afraid that the

ambitions go far beyond the Jordan River, possibly to the Euphrates I understand this to be implied in the oath soldiers in Israel are swearing in front of the Wailing Wall.

In short: the situation is critical, as it has always been, since November 1917 when British duplicity got its clear formulation in the Balfour Declaration. Given the strength of the Israel-US Alliance, the strategy of the Palestinians even when seen as a part of the Arab nation, would have to be the strategy of the weak. Terrorism is one such strategy. But it mobilizes the repressive elements on the Jewish side, and plays on the US-Israel Alliance at its strongest points.

Crucial to the struggle is the ability to form links, even alliances, with the softer parts of the Jewish population, in Israel, in the United States or elsewhere. They would be the people, 350 thousand of them, who poured into the streets of Tel Aviv to protest the massacre in Sabra and Chatila. They would be the Peace Now people; they would be the many soldiers even highly critical, according to the recent movies and documentaries, not only of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon June 1982, but also of the occupation policies. Every single terrorist act will weaken their resolve to do something about the situation. Hard Islam playing up to hard Judaism, of which Zionism is a political expression instead of soft Islam playing up to soft Judaism--although we should not underestimate the extent to which also soft Judaism may have Zionist content.

I use this as a background for the discussion of the whole strategy of nonviolence which evidently would have to include both goals, processes and indicators. I think it has been a weakness so far that the goal has either been unclear, or stated in terms entirely unacceptable to the Jewish side. At this point I then come back to the conceptualization of the conflict as one between right and right, with both Jews and Arabs having legitimate claims on living in the Eastern Mediterranean area. And the only solution that I can imagine, given this, would be a confederation, with territory divided into cantons, some Jewish, some Arab, the total set of Jewish cantons possibly referring to itself as Israel without being an independent state, and the total set of Arab cantons doing the same.³

Overarching this type of partition would be a joint state, Jewish and Arab, with federal territory in a completely symmetrically organized Jerusalem, the name of that state being left open. But it should invoke neither Jewish nor Arab symbols and traditions. If others can come up with a better vision I would be delighted since I know perfectly well that there is something utopian about what has just been said. "Unrealistic", some people might say. To this I could then retort that even more unrealistic is Israel at present, not to mention the kind of expansionist goals that I think are inherent in Zionism as mentioned above, or any Palestinian vision of complete and total Arab control of the whole territory.

Absolutely essential are dialogues with the softer elements of the Jewish side in order to formulate and explore alternatives of

this type, for instance with people like Joseph Abileah, Haifa, who for something like a generation now has argued visions very similar to what I just mentioned. The countless dialogues between Jews and Arabs willing to meet and exchange views, in the Eastern Mediterranean area as also in the United States and in Western Europe, could feed into this process and become highly meaningful. All the time bearing in mind that the Eastern Mediterranean has the highest density of Chosen Peoples per square mile in the world, and it is difficult to believe that viable solution can be developed by people suffering too strongly from that type of complex.

It is more than enough to refer to Yossi Dayan, the second in command of the Kach party in the movie Bridge Over The Cloud: "He should leave. He and his people should leave. This is the land of God. He is going to suffer if he is staying. God offered this land to us. We are the Chosen People. To stay, for him, is a desecration of God." Or the American Jew in the movie who said "I believe the land was given to the Jewish people" and when asked "By whom?" answered "By somebody called God". Or to reflect on the former Prime Minister, Menachem Begin who made an extra balcony on his house so as to be able to see the village of Deir Yassim where he himself massacred so many Palestinians.

The only possible process is massive nonviolence. We should contemplate fully the implication of having a population of four million Palestinians, two million there, in occupied Palestine, two million in the Diaspora, scattered in the Middle

East, in Western Europe and North America and in other parts of the world. Imagine that 100%, 50%, 25% of them could go into direct action at the same time! And imagine that this could be coordinated with Jews inside Israel who would find the alternative goal of peace between Jews and Arabs by far superior to continued Zionist expansion in the search of "secure borders"--one of the more transparent pretexts of recent history. And coordinated not only with the contestants in the conflict, but also with sympathizers with the Arab cause all over the world, remembering that the overwhelming majority of the United Nations is on the Palestinian side, and so is the majority of the peoples of the world. The sympathizers with the Zionists are in the minority, even a small one in Western Europe and North America, and some other places, not thereby underestimating the power of these people, particularly over the media.

So, a general strike from the inside, combined with constructive work in the Arab-Jewish context, and from the outside a giant "green march" on Israel, in the hundreds of thousands, even the millions, from all sides, including by ship--but not from the air since that easily engenders nervousness. Would the soldiers in Israel shoot, would they try to massacre a crowd of nonviolent civilians? To be quite frank, I do not know. I have been led to believe that the Boers in South Africa, another Chosen People, might do so if the Africans should march on Johannesburg. I do not know. But I know one thing: if they should

start anything like this their supporters in Western Europe would turn against them and massively so, and they might lose much of the support they have in North America (still another Chosen People, seeing itself as they have done for a long time now as God's New Israel). I doubt that Israel can afford this.

How would they get food, how would they sustain themselves during a general strike? I have visions of thousands of balloons coming on a westerly wind from Jordan and other countries, dropping supplies, much of which would fall into the wrong hands, but much of which would arrive. I have visions of people preparing for this eventuality, storing food in advance, over a long period.

Add to this the vision of a Palestine Liberation Day celebrated all over the world with sympathizers organizing sit-down strikes outside all Israeli embassies, boycotting everything that smacks of Zionism, engaging in constructive dialogue wherever possible, and not only with soft Jews, but also with hard ones.

But will Palestinian Arabs and others be willing to engage in such actions? For instance, would they sacrifice the time, would they travel to participate? If any people in the world should have this in their culture the Muslims would certainly be among them. A people, a nation that for more than 1300 years has had in its tradition the calling to travel to Mecca, the

hadj. A people that in the very beginning of the history of Islam had hizrat, massive emigration, as a basic tool of non-violence struggle. Should they not be able to travel, to move, to struggle nonviolently for their most cherished goals? Hard to believe.

Then, the indicators: how would we know that we are on the right track towards the goal? By interspersing intermediate goals, the lesser goals, the countless struggles as they are fought now, today, in the West Bank. The planting of olive trees against Jewish duplicity is very touching, a story that should be told over the world. Jews uprooting trees, against life; Arabs planting trees--the symbolism is perfect. This may also be one of those cases where nonviolence wins by losing: precisely by uprooting the seedlings again the settlers might have done themselves a great disfavor, on the condition that the story becomes sufficiently known.⁴

Of course, any struggle like this would be, and is today, an exercise in power. But what kind of power? I would argue not only power-over-others, but also power-over-oneself.⁵ The other side is superior in military power, but military power only has a bite if the people against which it is directed are fearful. Fearlessness serves as an inoculation against military power, and very many Palestinian youths have demonstrated fearlessness through their violent acts. It is not a

scarce commodity on the Palestinian side, the argument would only be that it has been misdirected.

Another tremendously important source of power is of course economic: the Israelis try to make the Palestinians dependent on themselves through economic means. An alternative, self-sufficient economy, in other words dependency on oneself rather than on others, would be still another condition for successful struggle.

Then there is cultural power: the whole web of norms and values that make commands bite, such as obedience to the nation, obedience to the state, not to mention obedience to the nation-state. Again the Palestinians should be well equipped: identity in ~~the~~ strength of Islam, the pride in their traditions, cultural survival as an act of fantastic achievement of that people today, in the Diaspora, should be an important source of inspiration.

And then, last but not least, political power. I see political power as the concerted mobilization of the other forms of power inside a clear strategy, with goals, processes and indicators. Maybe this has been the weakest point on the Palestinian side, and along all three dimensions: unclearly and unacceptably stated goals, a process where violence has been taken for granted often in an unreflected manner, and no clear "indicators", sign-posts and milestones on the road towards that goal.

Let me now in conclusion expose what has been said so far to the five acid tests that I used in connection with the discussion of Solidarność: five Gandhian rules (among many) for non-violent struggle, to see how it stands up.

The first rule was the admonition not to expand the goal. Imagine the goal is formulated as a cooperative Jewish-Arab state, institutionally shaped as a confederation. Imagine the struggle moves the whole "system" in that direction. In other words, the cooperative state starts taking shape, not as something imposed on one or both of the parties, but as an accepted solution, and that is, indeed, always the goal of nonviolent struggle. Conversion, not coercion--not only of Other, but also of Self. In that case some would say: let us expand the goal! Let us do what is really in our heart: a Palestinian state with some Jewish inhabitants. Gandhi would say: stick to your goals once formulated. Make yourself a reliable conflict partner, see the conflict as a contract within which you act.

Second, there should be a place for the other side after the conflict, a life after struggle. In other words, there should be some kind of Israel; but an autonomous, fully independent state is unacceptable. Vindictiveness does not belong in nonviolence; accommodation, space for the other side does.

Third, keep contact at all costs. This applies not only to the more positive discussion partners on the other side, but to everybody. It is interesting to see who is breaking that rule today: the US-Israel alliance, clinging to its unwillingness to negotiate with PLO. And they are the ones who lose in the public eye all over the world for this reason, preparing the political ground for a struggle of the type indicated here.

Fourth, constructive action. In all phases of the struggle make sure that the positive image comes through in terms of what is wanted as the ultimate goal: a cooperative, peaceful, society that offers livelihood for both groups, and others who could join. Again the olive seedlings come to mind as a highly constructive symbolism, as opposed to the violent act. One little point in this connection: the level of knowledge of the other two in the occidental religious triangle of Judaism-Christianity-Islam is much too low. A higher level of knowledge can only be obtained through dialogue and other types of educational efforts. Any effort in that direction would already be constructive action. Particularly important is to open oneself for the soft traditions in the other two, not only seeing one's own religion as soft and the other two as hard. A position that certainly could not be characterized as irrational given the evidence provided by history-- but is nevertheless unfruitful, and therefore to be avoided.

And fifth and finally: don't be naive! Nonviolent struggle is no easy road, nor is the violent road. Moreover, nonviolence takes time because it is based on psychological processes of accommodation and acceptance, not on physiological process of maiming and killing. Again the Arab side comes out positively with a word, prominent in the language, for the personal quality needed: patience, zabur. So I would conclude: zabur, much of it, but not too much! There is a limit to how long injustice should be tolerated.

N O T E S

* Paper prepared for the Conference on Nonviolent Political Struggle, Arab Thought Forum, Amman, Jordan 15-18 November 1986.

[1] See Anthony Nutting, **The Arabs**, Mentor Books, New York, 1964, pp. 194f. "For one thing, Hulagu's wife was a Christian; for another, he had made a deal with the Byzantine king of Armenia to spare all Christians and their places of worship and to help recover Jerusalem, provided that the Christians helped him to destroy Islam".

[2] See Johan Galtung, **Essays in Peace Research**, Vol. V, ch. 3, pp. 77-116.

[3] For a related but also different vision, see Mahdi F. Abdul-Hadi, **Thoughts on Israel's Policies and Practices in Jerusalem**, Center for International Affairs, Harvard, Cambridge, 1985, "Part VIII, A Solution?", pp. 14-16. Basic aspects of his plan:

"There should be an Arab Jerusalem and an Israeli Jerusalem, each exercising full sovereignty within its own territory, but with no barriers between them and no impediment to freedom of movement between them"

"There should be a UN representative to head a permanent body of specialists and experts stationed in Jerusalem, not as governor, but to exercise the following duties:

(a) Coordinating between the Arab Municipality and the Israeli Municipality in the open city of Jerusalem"

However, Dr Abdul-Hadi's plan is a two states solution, stipulating that "The territory of Arab Jerusalem should be a separate enclave within Palestinian territory, while the territory of Israeli Jerusalem should be a separate enclave within Israel". In the paper quoted in [2] above there is also the outline of a two states solution, but I do see that as the second best.

[4] For an example, see Mubarak E. Awad and R. Scott Kennedy, **Nonviolent Struggle in the Middle East: The Druze of the Golan, A Case of Nonviolent Resistance**, New Society, Santa Cruz, 1983.

[5] For this approach to power, very much based on Gandhi's understanding of power, see Johan Galtung, **Gandhi Today**, Abele, Torino, 1987; Peter Hammer Verlag, Wuppertal, 1987, ch.2.2, section on power. For an earlier version, see my **The True Worlds**, The Free Press/Macmillan, 1980, ch.2.4.