

ON THE HISTORY OF PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

1. From Zionist Settlement to the Establishment of the State of Israel

The bilateral conflict between Israelis and Palestinians began with the Zionists' claim to power and the first instances of Zionist 'land grabbing' (Dan Diner) in Palestine more than one hundred years ago. Today, the conflict can only be appreciated fully within the context of the imperialism and colonialism that existed at the end of the 19th Century. The Zionist settlement project began with the construction of Rishon LeZion in 1882. Five years later, at the First Zionist Congress, held in Basle in 1897, the nationalistic-political program for a '*Judensstaat*' was presented to the public. This led, amongst other things, to Theodore Herzl becoming known as the 'Father of Zionism'.

The historical-ideological basis for the expropriation of Palestinian land and the general discrimination against the Palestinians had existed long before the first instances of Zionist land grabbing. Jews lived in the land of the Philistines, which the Romans called 'Palaestina', some 2,000 years ago. Around the year 1,100 BC, the Hebrews and Israelites settled in the mountains of Palestine, but as far back as the 8th Century BC, the first Jews were deported by the Assyrians, and from 585 to 538 BC Jews were forced to live in exile in Babylon. Under the rule of the Persians, Greeks and Romans, the Jews resettled in Palestine until the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in the year 135 BC and either killed or deported its Jewish inhabitants. However, the more precarious their situation became, and the longer their exile continued, the stronger was their longing to return to Zion. This longing is expressed in the '18 Petitions Prayer' of pious Jews and in the fact that at the end of each Pessach feast, Jews taking leave of one another will say, "Next year in Jerusalem" - in Zionism, this religious wish was combined with a political program.

Western Christianity regarded the Arabs as 'strangers' in the 'Holy Land', and their 'symbolic expropriation' corresponded with the prevailing colonial attitude, namely, that one should take possession of all land that 'no one' claimed. For a man like the American President Woodrow Wilson,

the return of the Jews to Palestine was like the fulfillment of the Biblical prophecies, and he zealously supported the Zionist project.

Moses Hess is considered one of the leading thinkers behind modern Zionism. Because of the latent anti-Semitism and the prevailing nationalism, he was one of the first to demand in 1862 the creation of a state for Jews in their ancestral homeland, Palestine. Hess, a contemporary of Karl Marx and a devout Jew combined socialist ideas with the ethics of Judaism, the result being liberal-minded nationalism. His idea to establish a Jewish community consisting of farmers and laborers has left its stamp on Israel's development for decades.¹

The call for the emancipation of the Jews was a Western European phenomenon, which, paradoxically, was to produce the evil of modern anti-Semitism. Although the roots of anti-Semitism go further back in history, one can say that modern anti-Semitism was born in approximately 1880. It expresses antipathy and hostility against Jews as Jews and fights against their political, social and legal equalization. Even a Christian convert to Judaism is still considered a Jew according to modern anti-Semitism, whose followers despise assimilated as well as non-assimilated human beings of Jewish origin and view 'the Jew' as the embodiment of all things negative.

In the East, the religious Jewish circles initially rejected emancipation. However, when it came to an emancipation movement as a result of the pogroms, it was dominated by the Jewish national element. One of the leaders of this movement, which called itself 'The Enlightenment', was Peres Smolenskin, who rejected an interweaving with Western culture due to his fear of assimilation. He founded in Vienna the newspaper *Die Morgenröte*, which would soon become a leading organ of the new Zionist movement. In the publication *Eternal Peace* Smolenskin turned against Reform Judaism, which degraded Judaism to a confession, as well as against religious orthodoxy, which was frozen in rituals dictated by Jewish Law. For him, religion was the national link that connected the Jewish people, the people of the mind. Thus, the spiritual rebirth was for him the crucial factor.

The pogroms in Russia that followed the assassination of Czar Alexander II led to emigration to 'Zion' and to Eastern European Jews flocking to Western Europe. This immigration, however, endangered the assimilation of the West European Jewry, and it soon became clear that the Jewish bourgeoisie wanted nothing to do with their 'brethren'. The Englishman Sir Edwin Montague, for example, remarked that the only thing that

¹ See Moses Hess, *Ausgewählte Schriften*. Köln, 1962.

linked him to other Jews of other countries was the religion, saying: "I notice that there is no Jewish nation."

Leo Pinsker displayed more understanding than Moses Hess in his paper 'Auto-Emancipation', which appeared in 1882. In the paper, the physician from Odessa rejected assimilation and called for Jews to be allowed to enjoy equality of rights in their own national state, claiming that only through auto-emancipation could this goal be reached. The required land was to be purchased by a national congress as a national good. Pinsker, although insisting that a Jewish state should be established somewhere, did not originally advocate that it should be established in Israel² and it was the 'lovers of Zion' who forced him to decide on Palestine, where, at the time of the first *aliya*, over 30,000 Jews lived among half a million Arabs.

The conservative Jews adamantly rejected the integration concept because they saw it as a 'surrendering' of their Jewishness and as being based on the premise that assimilation and equal rights were impossible to achieve. It was the publication of Theodore Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*³ - considered the *Magna Carta* of Zionism - which led to a turning point in political Zionism. With the publishing of the book, the Jewish elite also reacted to the dissolution of Jewish values and began 'unburying' the character of Judaism. According to Herzl, who was commissioned by the First Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897 to negotiate with the European governments on the provision of a territory for the Jewish state, only a Jewish political formation "in Palestine or anywhere else on this planet" would solve the Jewish question. The Jewish question was for Herzl a national question, which could only be satisfactorily solved by the creation of an independent state. Indeed, at the Basle assembly, the 'creation of a public-legal homestead' for the Jewish people in Palestine was decided upon, and prophetic Herzl was to subsequently write in his diary: "In Basle I founded the Jewish state." With this, the alternative of the 'assimilation' of Jews into their respective societies, which Walther Rathenau recommended in his brochure 'Listen Israel, was no longer relevant.

Herzl's strategy was now followed methodically and systematically, and Zionism no longer presented the messianic redeemer ideas using religious terminology, but used political terms instead. It was Herzl's intention to not only facilitate the continuation of the traditional Jewish culture, but also to radically renew it, which resulted in the Ultra Orthodox resisting the Zionists and accusing them of wanting to advance with their program the messianic future. Herzl paid them no attention, and anti-Semitism became

² See Leo Pinsker, *Autoemancipation*. Berlin, 1917.

³ See Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*. Leipzig, 1896.

an important constitutional element in his vision and that of other Zionists. Alfred Lilienthal voiced the opinion that it was the task of the Rabbinate, Jewish nationalists and local representatives to keep this prejudice alive.⁴ From the beginning, the Jewish identity was negatively determined.

The concept of Zionism was a vital component of the birth of the State of Israel, but it has to be seen within the context of Western imperialism and colonialism. Moreover, Zionism can only be appreciated fully if its victims, the Palestinians, are considered, since their tragedy began with the implementation of the Zionist plan. The national Zionist movement advanced right at the moment when Western colonialism began to divide the world into spheres of influence, and both were clearly interconnected. British imperialism in particular supported the Zionists in their desire to establish a 'homestead' in Palestine in order to consolidate its rule in the Arab area *vis-à-vis* the other colonial powers.

Another common concern of this alliance was the splitting of the Arab World. Although the Zionist movement and European colonialism were similar in many regards, they had one fundamental difference: it was the 'mission' of the colonialists to bring seemingly culturally underdeveloped people the blessings of Western culture, whereas the Zionists were motivated by a desire to establish a state at the expense of another people, and it was their efforts to do so that characterized the Zionist colonial project. How though was the project realized? Land was purchased through the Jewish National Fund and leased only to Jews: the concepts of 'Jewish labor' and the necessity of buying 'Jewish goods' were widely disseminated, which led to a boycott of Arab products.

Zionism resulted not only in discrimination against the Arab population, but also in a schism within the Jewish civilization, i.e., between secular nationalists and religious Jews, by introducing an ethnocentric value system to a culture that was based on monotheistic belief. This split within the Jewry led to the emergence of a Zionist movement that eventually created an ethnocentric state for the Jews. The consequence of this development, which completely renounces Jewish culture, was formulated by Asher Ginzburg under his pseudonym Ahad Ha'am. Ha'am, whose ideas are known in Israel but are not widely disseminated elsewhere, pointed to the fact that a Zionist state that is not based on the Jewish culture would become a state just like Germany or France, only it would be inhabited by Jews. Such a state existed at the time of King Herod, when the Jewish culture was rejected and those seeking to encourage it persecuted in the 'State of the Jews'. Likewise, Herzl's *Judenstaat* could not produce a Jew-

⁴ See Alfred Lilienthal, *The Other Side of the Coin*. New York, 1970, p. 184.

ish culture because the Jews wanted to be 'like all other people'. Thus, their ideas lacked the cultural characteristics of historical Jewry. The objection of Ha'am is today reflected in the ethnocentric type of Zionism, which stresses that the Jewish people are not like other peoples. As far back as in 1913, Ha'am criticized in a letter to a settler the behavior of the Zionists *vis-à-vis* the Arabs: "If this is supposed to be the 'Messiah', then I hope that he will never come."

Until today, the question remains of whether Herzl and the other Zionist representatives knew about the existence of Arabs or whether they simply considered them irrelevant. Did Herzl and his supporters act in a political vacuum? Today, nobody can claim that Herzl and the others were not aware of the problem, and it now appears that cultural arrogance, ignorance and *Zeitgeist* were the major components of the unhappy alliance. When Max Nordau learned that Arabs live in Palestine, he reportedly said to Herzl, "There are Arabs in Palestine! I didn't know that! We are going to commit an injustice."

The political slogan of Israel Zangwill, "A land without people for people without a land," matched perfectly the expansionistic *Zeitgeist* of that epoch and would become one of the Zionists' historical myths that still survive today. The slogan forms the anti-thesis to the colonial approach through settlement. Ha'am wrote in 1891, after his return from Palestine, in the article 'Truth from Palestine', that the country was not empty and that one hardly saw any uncultivated land. "We were used to believing that all Arabs are wild people from the desert, ignorant like animals, who can neither see nor understand what is happening around them," said Ha'am. "To believe this is a big mistake. The Arabs - like all Semites - have a sharp brain and are very cunning." Ha'am then described how the Arabs traded and tried to take advantage of others, just like the Europeans. "Should the time ever come," continued Ha'am, "when the life of our people has developed to such a degree that we are driving out the indigenous population to a larger or bigger extent, I do not believe that they will just leave." Ha'am also realized that there was no way to avoid the conflict between Zionist colonization and the indigenous Palestinians, during which two secular kinds of nationalism were to collide in Palestine: the Jewish and Arab. This nationalism is today increasingly displaced and instrumentalized by Jewish and Islamic fundamentalism.

According to leading representatives of the Zionist movement, there were no doubts about what should happen to the indigenous population. Israel Zangwill envisaged that it would be necessary "either to chase away the indigenous tribes with the sword, as our ancestors have done, or to live

with the problem posed by a large, strange population."⁵ The idea of transfer was also suggested by Herzl, who wrote in his diary, "We will send the poor population unnoticed over the border and provide them with work in the transfer countries while we deny them any work in our own country. The wealthy population will join us. The expropriations as well as the transfer of the poor have to be pursued with delicacy and care. The owners of real estate shall believe that they cheat us and sell over value while we will not sell them back anything."⁶

That the Zionist movement did not have pure motives in settling in Palestine was apparent in the exclamation of David Ben Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, back in the year 1937: "The land is in our eyes not the land of its current inhabitants...if one says that Eretz Israel is the land of two nations, he doubly falsifies the Zionist truth...Palestine should and must not solve the questions of both people, but only the question of one people, the Jewish people of the world."⁷ Herzl, it should be noted, never elaborated upon the historical claims of the Palestinians.

From the beginning, Zionism did not aim at the sharing of the country with the indigenous population, but questioned the Arab presence in general, which resulted in an exclusive ideology, according to which the non-Jewish population is considered superfluous. Such an ideology is very prone to integrating the idea of population transfer or deportation. In this school of thought, which is very influential until this day, the Arab-Israeli conflict has no place because the Arabs are only perceived as a minority.

There were different ideas concerning the size of the land claimed by the Zionist movement. Depending on the political opinion and the political circumstances, different borders were and still are mentioned. Max Nordau for example wanted to expand "the borders of Europe until the Euphrates." At the Versailles Peace Conference, the Zionist organization suggested obtaining the south of Lebanon, parts of Syria along the Hijra railway line to Jordan and parts of the Sinai until Al-Arish as a 'homestead'. There were even voices that called for a Palestine that resembled the one that existed during the time of David or Solomon. Herzl reportedly said to Reich Chancellor Chlodwig Duke of Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst that "We demand what we need according to our population." This seems to have remained the leading motive of the Israeli settlement drive, and until now, Israel has managed to avoid clearly defining its borders or indicating its future shape.

⁵ Israel Zangwill, *The Voice of Jerusalem*. London, 1920, p. 88.

⁶ Theodore Herzl, *Tagebücher*. Volume 1, Berlin, 1922, p. 98.

⁷ David Ben Gurion, *Zionistische Außenpolitik*. Berlin, 1937, p. 28.

What is Zionism? Zionism is based on three fundamental assumptions:

1. The Jews are a people and not just a religious community. Therefore, the Jewish question is a national question.
2. Anti-Semitism and the resulting persecution of Jews represent a latent danger for the Jewish people.
3. Palestine (Eretz Israel) was and remains the home of the Jewish people.

From the beginning of the Jewish colonization, the goal was to achieve a Jewish majority in Palestine. For Vladimir Jabotinsky, head of the revisionist stream of Zionism, the achievement of a Jewish majority was the main goal of Zionism because the term 'Jewish state' implied a Jewish majority; Palestine would become a Jewish land at the exact moment when a Jewish majority was achieved. Jabotinsky remarked, ironically, that the Palestinians might not have had the right idea about the Zionist enterprise, yet the reactions of Palestinians on the spot revealed that they fully understood the true intentions of Zionism.

From the beginning, there was protest and resistance against the land grabbing, which continues until today. In this resistance, the reasoning of Palestinian nationalism, the origins of which Rashid Khalidi dated back to the year 1908, was evident. The peasants resisted the Zionist settlement project, which led to a mobilization of the urban middle classes. The first Palestinian newspapers, such as *Al-Quds*, warned of Zionism as posing a threat to the "Palestinian nation" and the "Palestinian land." The Zionist settlement would inevitably force the indigenous population out of their land.⁸

To explain the land grabbing and the return of the Jews, the Zionist movement stuck to a uniform interpretation of history. According to this interpretation, today's Jews are the descendants of the Hebrews, although this has yet to be proved by Jewish anthropologists; the same applies to the fact that the Jews and not the Arabs are the original inhabitants of Palestine. That the Jews were illegally driven out is only partly correct, because many Jews left Palestine for economic reasons prior to the expulsion of the others by the Romans. Religious auxiliary arguments have repeatedly been used to back Zionism and give it legitimacy: arguments that for many were not ideology but reality.

⁸ See Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity. The Construction of a Modern National Consciousness*. New York, 1977.

Exactly how far this legend building has gone is clear in the book of Joan Peters, with the author denying the Arabs any right to exist in Palestine. The land was empty, and the Arabs falsified their genealogy - or so Peters indefensibly claims.⁹ Norman G. Finkelstein writes about this book, which has been celebrated as 'pioneering' in the United States in a similar manner to the book of Daniel J. Goldhagen, that "it represents one of the most spectacular deceptions that have ever been published on the Arab-Israeli conflict."¹⁰ Together with Ruth Bettina Birn, Finkelstein has only recently de-mystified Goldhagen's book, calling it a "non-book" and Goldhagen's mono-causal interpretation and analysis a complete bankruptcy.¹¹

Zionists described the Palestinians as Arabs who had only recently immigrated to Palestine due to the opportunities created by the settlers. Arabs were considered 'backward' and 'law-breakers', whose actual home was in the 22 Arab states. What the settlers actually introduced, however, were simply more profitable methods of production, compared to which the feudal Arab system was inferior. Zionist settlement brought the indigenous population the loss of its home, the destruction of its society, its culture and tradition, as well as the mass flight to refugee camps. This colonization has had disastrous consequences for the Palestinians, which last until today, bringing for the Palestinians living in Palestine chaos and destruction. Most of the Arab inhabitants lost their houses, their land, their businesses, and their capital, which resulted in the ruination of the Palestinian society. Did Zionism not lose its ethical legitimacy with the expulsion of the Palestinians in the year 1948?

Despite enormous diplomatic progress, most Jews were indifferent *vis-à-vis* Zionism. This attitude only changed when the national socialists used anti-Semitism as an instrument of power and killed the Jews systematically. Zionists then used this anti-Semitism for their own goals, reducing it to racism and persecution, on the basis of which they argued that the situation of the Jews was hopeless. The Jew-phobia thus became an inte-

⁹ See Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial*. New York, 1984.

¹⁰ Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israeli-Palestine Conflict*. London, New York, 1995, p. 22.

¹¹ See Norman G. Finkelstein, "Ein fadenscheiniger Schwindel", in: *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 22 August 1997; Norman G. Finkelstein, "Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's Crazy Thesis: A Critique of Hitler's Willing Executioners", in: *new left review* (1997), 224, pp. 39-87; Norman G. Finkelstein/Ruth Bettina Birn, *Eine Nation auf dem Prüfstand. Die Goldhagen-These und die Historische Wahrheit*. Hildesheim, 1998. Both authors are subject to harsh attacks by the Jewish lobby in the US. Due to his criticism of Israeli politics *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians and of the Zionist ideology Finkelstein, for example, does not get a job at university but has to keep his head above water with occasional teaching posts at colleges. Mrs. Birn, a Ph.D. student of Eberhard Jäckel, faces a battue-beating of the Canadian-Jewish lobby, which accuses her to have infringed 'community sensitivity'. Should such an argument triumph, the freedom of opinion in Canada would need to be questioned.

gral component of Zionism; it alone made Jews Jews and, according to Herzl, it was the "life elixir" for the Zionist movement. Without the Jew-phobia, it is unlikely that Zionism would have remained an esoteric-national movement. According to Leo Pinsker, the Jew-phobia was a "characteristic inherent in the human nature."

Besides this viewpoint, there is also an economic interpretation. According to this, the causes of the Jew-phobia are to be found not so much in the 'race', culture or the position of Jews as a minority but in economic conditions. The rise of capitalism deepened the differences between the different classes, which led to new resentment *vis-à-vis* the Jews and frustrations being vented through attacks on the Jewish minority rather than those who caused the misery. The power elites now used anti-Semitism as an instrument of power in order to strengthen the *petty bourgeoisie* in its latent racism. Those who suffered from this were the Jews of Europe. Thus, anti-Semitism was not only essential for Zionism, which also made use of it by claiming that there could not be any emancipation outside a Jewish state; this "eternal victim image" then also became a key feature in Israel with regard to the identity of the state.¹² Hence, Zionism has not solved any of the problems it originally wanted to eliminate.

Without the help of a great power, the Zionist movement would never have succeeded. A crucial document was the declaration of Lord Arthur James Balfour that was sent to Lord Walter Lionel Rothschild in the year 1917. A unilateral declaration of sympathy by the British Government, the declaration, which was the *carte blanche* for the creation of a Jewish state, had no meaning from the point of view of International Law. The declaration reads as follows:

"Dear Lord Rothschild, I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet. 'His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or in any other country'. I should be grateful if you would bring the declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation."

¹² See Aiva Orr, *Israel: Politics, Myths and Identity Crisis*. London, Boulder, Col., 1994, p. 67.

According to the opinion of the Oxford historian Elisabeth Monroe, the Balfour Declaration was "one of the biggest mistakes in our imperial history." The declaration suggested that there was a predominantly Jewish population in Palestine and some insignificant minorities; it failed to mention that the 'unimportant' Palestinian 'minority' (90 percent) had existed continuously for 1,300 years in Palestine and owned 97 percent of the land! The British Government had no right whatsoever to assume responsibility for deciding the fate of the indigenous population. Moreover, the right to self-determination that was deemed valid for other 'liberated areas' was deliberately disregarded in the case of Palestine: "In Palestine we do not even propose to take the wishes of the current inhabitants into consideration... The four great powers are obliged to Zionism. Right or wrong, good or bad, Zionism is rooted in a long tradition, in the present necessities, in future hopes, which are of greater importance than the wishes and the disadvantages of 700,000 Arabs, who currently live in this historic land" – these were the words of Lord Balfour in a memorandum to his cabinet colleagues dated 11 August 1919. This open and partly racist declaration was the peak of the overall deception. For the American President Woodrow Wilson, the support of this project was a "holy obligation."

According to the Balfour Declaration, the establishment of a Jewish homestead should not result in any disadvantages for the non-Jewish, i.e., the Arab-Palestinian community. There was no legal reasoning to deny the Palestinians, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a state next to the Jews in the British Mandate area that had existed since 1922. As the inhabitants of Palestine, who shared a common history, language and culture that was characterized by close family ties, they were the legitimate inheritors of the Ottoman Empire. Their claims were and remain the same as those of Croatians, Slovenians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians and other national minorities. In their particular case, however, the Zionist movement countered their legitimate claims.

In order to make the claims of the Palestinians appear illegitimate, the Palestinians were described by the Zionist movement as Arabs who had only recently immigrated to Palestine due to the opportunities created by the settlers. This myth has also been repeated by the present Israeli Prime Minister, Benyamin Netanyahu, who said, "Many Arabs immigrated to Palestine in response to the increase in work opportunities that were created by the Jews." Netanyahu even repeated the Zangwillian myth concerning the country without people during his state visit to Austria in September 1997. Today, the "hard, uninhabited no-man's-land" in the Middle East is a "modern, dynamic state."¹³ The truth is that Palestinians were re-

¹³ "Die Zeit ist reif für normale Beziehungen", in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23 September 1997.

garded as 'law breakers' whose actual home was in one of the 22 Arab states. Consequently, they were not recognized as negotiation partners.

The behavior of the first settlers *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians was described by Ahad Ha'am after his return from Palestine in 1891 as follows: "They think the only language the Arabs understand is that of violence. Their behavior towards them is – to put it mildly – aggressive. They attack them without reason in their villages and are proud to humiliate them by kicking and beating them. This is the way in which they express their anger about the fact that another people lives in 'their' land and refuses to leave." Ha'am warned the Zionist movement about despising the Arabs, treating them like barbarians and ignoring their interests.

The Palestinian identity is not based on religious claims but on the rights of a clearly identifiable Palestinian entity that has obvious claims to the area in question. The negation of this national identity was to result in the rejection of the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

Martin Buber and Ernst Simon predicted that Zionism would rise and fall with its treatment of the Arabs. Such voices were vehemently rejected by the Zionists and had no influence on the development process. At the Zionist Congress held in Karlsbad in 1921, Buber – who was among the first warning voices of Zionism and Israel – called for a just bond with the Arabs, saying, "We frivolously throw away genuine and valuable sympathy if we now recognize a method, which we have thus far stigmatized as inhuman, by practicing it ourselves... Not from outside, but from within yourselves is the real, unsolvable problem spreading."

The majority of those present at the Zionist Congress expressed the desire of the Jewish people to coexist in an environment of friendship and mutual respect with the Arab population and, along with the Arabs, to turn the common homeland into a prosperous country. The Zionist leader Arthur Ruppin demanded that Jews and Arabs should live on an equal footing side by side, negating any claim to authority. How insincere he was became clear when he repeatedly voiced his support for a closed Jewish economy, voting against the employment of Arab laborers in Jewish enterprises and pleading for a boycott of Arab products and for the systematic purchase of Arab land, which deprived the Arabs of their livelihood.¹⁴

Initially, the Zionist movement was eager to embellish its colonial goals with rhetoric. Chaim Weizman declared in 1918 in Jaffa that Jews wanted to work shoulder to shoulder with the Arabs for the sake of prosperity in

¹⁴ See Arthur Ruppin, *Dreißig Jahre Aufbau in Palästina*. Berlin, 1937.

Palestine, and he assured Palestinian and Syrian leaders in Cairo that Zionism was not seeking power in the country. Moreover, before the Peel Commission began its work in Palestine in November 1936, as ordered by His Majesty the King of England, Weizman demonstrated a readiness to cooperate and referred to the Balfour Declaration, saying that he and his associates were aware that the non-Jewish population in Palestine should not be suppressed and that the declaration was a kind of guarantee for them. However, he demanded at the same time a state that should be as Jewish as England was English: a goal that was persistently pursued. Weizman put it this way before the Peel Commission: "We are a stubborn people and a people with a long memory. We never forget... We have never forgotten Palestine. And the steadfastness that has maintained the Jews throughout the centuries and through a long chain of inhuman sufferings is mainly thanks to this psychological attachment to Palestine."

Neither the Jewish settlers nor the British occupying power made a serious attempt to reach an agreeable solution with the Arabs or to acknowledge their rights *vis-à-vis* a state of their own. That their interests should have been considered is noted in the following letter, sent by the author Hans Kohn to Martin Buber in 1929: "We have been in Palestine for 12 years now and have not once seriously tried to secure the acceptance of the people or to negotiate with the people that live in the country. We have relied exclusively on the military power of Great Britain. We have set goals that inevitably and in themselves had to lead to conflicts with the Arabs and about which we should say that they are reason - and justified reason - for a national uprising against us."

Indeed, a national uprising soon took place. During the first pogrom of 1929 in Hebron, almost all of the Jews living there were killed. Several years later, in the summer of 1936, widespread fear on the part of the Arabs concerning the impressive and equally frightening development of the Jewish *Yishuv* (pre-state settlement of Palestine) and the realization that the colonization of the country would take place solely at their expense resulted in the Arab revolt against both the Mandate power and the Zionist settlers, prior to which numerous, small incidents resulting in casualties occurred. Thus, Arab anti-Zionism manifested itself violently for the first time in 1936. A significant contributor to this later was the Mufti of Jerusalem Amin Al-Husseini, who had been appointed by an English Zionist: the first High Commissioner of Palestine, Sir Herbert Samuel.

The attitude of the Arab population of Palestine was not anti-Zionist from the very beginning. In 1908, all religious communities in Palestine had welcomed the decree of the Moslem Government, which allowed for greater political and religious development possibilities, and on 9 August

of that year, all religious communities opened their holy sites to members of other faiths.

Eventually, the violent confrontations between Jewish combat units and the indigenous Palestinian population and the struggle against the British Mandate authority both got out of control, resulting in the willingness of the British to terminate their mandate, assigned by the League of Nations. The Jewish units fighting in Palestine - Haganah, Etzel (Irgun Zvai Leumi) and Lehi (Stern Gang) - were uniquely famous for the acts of terror they committed against the Palestinians and the British. Two Prime Ministers of Israel were once wanted by the mandate power, which had issued arrest warrants for the two Jewish 'terrorists'. Examples of their handiwork included the blowing up of a part of the King David Hotel, seat of the Palestine Government, and the massacre committed in the village of Deir Yassin on 9 April 1948, in which 250 Arab men, women and children were murdered; the Arabs took their revenge only a few days later when they killed 77 doctors, nurses and scientists on their way to Hadassah Hospital. Menachem Begin, head of operations during the Deir Yassin massacre and Prime Minister of Israel from 1977 to 1983, voiced the opinion that the massacre was not only "justified" but that without the "victory" of Deir Yassin "a state of Israel would never have come into existence."

In February 1947, when Palestine was on the edge of a civil war, the British turned to the United Nations. With this move, the stage was set for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. On 29 November 1947, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181, which provided for the division of Palestine between Arabs, who possessed 90 percent of the land, and Jews. At the time, 1,365,000 Arabs and 710,000 Jews lived in Palestine, and the numbers suggest that even without the Holocaust, which undoubtedly resulted in a lot of sympathy for the Zionist struggle, a Jewish state would have emerged, although the extent of the Nazi crimes and the refugee movement from Europe undoubtedly accelerated the rate at which it was born. However, as Michael Wolffsohn stresses, the establishment of Israel was mainly due to the "political, economic, social and military achievements of its founders."¹⁵ The massive British and American support should of course not be ignored.

The fight of the Jewish underground organizations was both an anti-colonial war against the British and a renewed colonial attempt to establish a state on the territory of another people against its will. The entire Arab World rejected the Partition Plan for understandable reasons, such as the

¹⁵ Michael Wolffsohn, *Ewige Schuld? 40 Jahre Deutsch-Jüdisch-Israelische Beziehungen*. München 1988.

net that it questioned the right of the Palestinians to the land in its entirety and promised to result in inestimable losses with regard to rights, property and political and social institutions. The Arabs regarded the Jewish claims to Palestine as illegal usurpation, a form of colonialism which denied the native population its right to a national state. As reported by Nahum Goldmann, even David Ben Gurion seemed to understand this: "Why should the Arabs make peace? If I were an Arab leader, I would never sign such an agreement with Israel. That is absolutely normal: we have taken their land. Sure, God has promised it to us but why should they be bothered by this? Our God is not theirs... They only see one thing: we came and stole their land. Why should they accept this?" The Palestinians, it should be noted, also feared that the Partition Plan would transform the 'Jewish problem' and bring Western European anti-Semitism to the Near East.

In view of the military operations, the UN General Assembly withdrew the Partition Plan less than six months after passing it and suggested an alternative proposal, which included the call for a temporary trusteeship for the undivided Palestine. The Arabs accepted the proposal while the Zionists rejected it vigorously and - while the assembly called for a special session in order to reconsider the Partition Plan - decided to take care of the matter themselves. As the British ended their mandate, the Zionists occupied Palestine, city by city, occupying, whilst pursuing their goal, many more parts than had been earmarked for the Jewish state. The terrified Arab population either fled in panic or was expelled by force, and by mid-May 1948, some 300,000 Arabs had left the country without even one single Arab soldier from the neighboring countries having entered Palestine.

The result of the Zionist occupation was the creation of three separate areas: Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Historical Jerusalem came under Arab rule while the western part of the city became part of the Jewish state and thus, Palestine was not divided according to the UN plan. When David Ben Gurion proclaimed the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, only six percent of Palestine was actually Jewish property; yet, following the war-like confrontations, Israel possessed 77 percent of the total area of Palestine; 21 percent more than the UN Partition Plan, which the Zionists had accepted, had allocated to the Jewish state. Then and afterwards, the Zionists argued that the Palestinian Arabs had forfeited their right to any part of Palestine because they had refused to be content with half of the country. Meanwhile, diplomatic recognition and massive economic support contributed to the legitimization of the new state.

In the summer of 1949, a peace conference took place in Lausanne, initiated by the Palestine Conciliation Commission. The Arab states and the Palestinian representatives wished to discuss the UN resolution as a basis for peace negotiations, but the idea was rejected by Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion. Israel's then Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett saw in this conference an opportunity for peace, but Ben Gurion completely rejected this notion. In contrast to Ben Gurion, Sharett was willing to return the territories occupied by Israel during the War of 1948 that belonged to the Palestinians in accordance with the UN Partition Plan, and he was prepared to consider the issues of the return of the refugees and the internationalization of the Holy Places. However, peace was not Ben Gurion's prime goal. In 1954, when Sharett became Prime Minister for a short time, he held secret talks on solving the Question of Palestine with the Egyptian Government, although the Arab side was not ready to conduct the talks publicly and in Israel the *de facto* power was still in the hands of Ben Gurion, "who did not seek peace with the Arabs."¹⁶

In recent times, the establishment of the State of Israel has been the subject of a great deal of controversy. Since the opening of the official archives in the 1980's, younger historians have increasingly questioned the official historical doctrine concerning the nascent state that was instituted between 1948-1952. Besides Benny Morris, Simcha Flapan in particular has questioned the official Israeli interpretation of history, maintaining that 'Plan D' was not a political plan for the expulsion of the Arabs and expressing the view that they were expelled for security reasons only. Morris eventually had to admit that since April 1948 there had been "clear signs pointing to a policy of expulsion on national and local levels." With the help of documents from the archives, Simcha Flapan, Ilan Pappé and Norman G. Finkelstein were able to prove that a deliberately planned expulsion of the Palestinians had indeed taken place.

Although it appears that Ben Gurion never issued an explicit expulsion order, many of his documented statements leave no doubt about his real intentions. For example, asked by Yigal Allon and Yitzhak Rabin about what should happen to the inhabitants of Lydda and Ramle (50,000-70,000), Ben Gurion reportedly answered: "Expel them!" Lieutenant-Colonel Rabin immediately signed an order that read as follows: "The inhabitants of Lydda must be expelled quickly irrespective of their age. The order is to be executed instantly"... which is exactly what happened. This excerpt concerning the expulsion order was removed from the memoirs of Ben Gurion, as reported by the *New York Times* on 23 October 1979.

¹⁶ Ilan Pappé, "Von Lausanne nach Oslo. Zur Geschichte des israelisch-palästinensischen Konflikts", in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 14/98.

Prior to the final attack on the Galilee, Ben Gurion declared: "When the fighting in the north resumes, the Galilee will be cleansed and empty of Arabs." That Ben Gurion had actually given this particular 'expulsion order' was confirmed by Israel Eldad, one of the most articulate Israeli rightwing ideologists, in the daily Yediot Aharonot on 10 February 1995: the reference to 'cleansing' appeared several times with regard to both the Galilee, Lydda and Ramle. Moreover, Ben Gurion did not concede a single square meter that was in the hands of the Israelis, regardless of whether it had been allocated by the United Nations or the United States. Ben Gurion is further said to have told Musa Alami in 1937: "Of course we want peace, but we came here not because of peace but because of Zionism."

In exactly the same spirit, the following arguments have been presented repeatedly by the official Israeli side:

- The Zionist movement's acceptance of the UN Partition Plan of November 1947 was a fundamental compromise, according to which the Zionist Jews relinquished their dream of a Jewish state in all of Palestine and recognized the Palestinians' claim to an independent state. Israel was ready to make such a sacrifice because it was the precondition for the peaceful implementation, involving Palestinian cooperation, of the UN resolution.

Flapan maintains, however, that the Zionists' agreement to the Partition Plan was only a tactical concession within the framework of an unchanged overall strategy. On the one hand, it aimed at the creation of an independent state for the Palestinians; therefore, Ben Gurion concluded a secret agreement with King Abdallah of Transjordan, who thought the annexation of the area earmarked for the Palestinians would be a first step towards realizing his reign over the Greater Syria region. On the other hand, the strategy aimed at extending the territory earmarked by the UN for the Jewish state.

- The Arab Palestinians adamantly rejected the partition of Palestine and followed the call of the Mufti of Jerusalem to declare total war on the Jewish state; this forced the Jews to look for a military solution.

Flapan insists that it is only partly true that the Arab Palestinians rejected the partition of Palestine. The Mufti did indeed fight the Partition Plan but initially, the Palestinians did not follow his call for a 'holy jihad' against Israel. On the contrary, many Palestinian notables and groups were keen to reach a *modus vivendi* with the new state. It was only the absolute resistance of Ben Gurion to the creation of a Palestinian state that drove the Palestinians to the side of the Mufti.

The number of fighters was not very high and they were clearly inferior to the Haganah troops in terms of numbers, equipment and training. At the beginning of 1948, the Mufti had asked all Arab states for weapons and money but in vain.

- Before and after the foundation of the State of Israel the Palestinians followed the call of the Arab leadership to leave the country temporarily and to return at a later stage with the victorious armies. The Jewish leadership tried its best to make them stay but was unsuccessful.

Flapan argues that the Israeli politicians expelled the Palestinians from their villages and towns. While Morris mentions security reasons, Flapan and Finkelstein explain that the transfer was the result of Zionist ideology, saying the aim of the Zionist movement was to create a 'Jewish state', which necessitated the expulsion of the original inhabitants. As far back as in 1938, Ben Gurion had said at a meeting of his party, "I am for the forced evacuation. I cannot see anything immoral in this."

- All Arab states united on 15 May 1948 in order to enter Palestine, to destroy the newly established State of Israel and expel its Jewish inhabitants.

First and foremost, the Arab states wanted to prevent the reaching of the accord between the provisional Jewish government and King Abdallah, and they only entered Palestine to help their Arab friends after the proclamation of the State of Israel and the termination of the British Mandate. It was never their intention to destroy Israel. For example, the Jordanian Government ordered the general who led the Jordanian troops not to enter Jewish territory.

- The entry of the Arabs – in violation of the UN Partition Resolution – made the War of 1948 inevitable.

According to Flapan, the war between Israel and the Arabs was inevitable *per se*. The Arabs had agreed to a last minute American proposal calling for a three-month cease-fire on condition that Israel would meanwhile postpone its declaration of independence. The provisional Israeli government voted with six to four against the American proposal.

- The tiny Israel faced the attack of the Arab forces like David had once faced the giant Goliath: a people that was far inferior in num-

bers and badly armed was at the risk of being crushed by an overwhelming military machine.

According to Flapan, the comparison with David and Goliath is invalid. Ben Gurion admitted that the actual war of 'self-defense' lasted only four weeks, until the cease-fire of 11 June. Afterwards, large deliveries of weapons arrived in Israel, and the already better trained and experienced Israeli troops thus enjoyed technological superiority by land, air and sea.

- Israel has always stretched out its hands for peace, but no Arab leader has ever recognized its right to exist; thus, there was nobody with whom peace talks could have been conducted.

This is also not correct. In the years between the end of World War II and 1952, Israel rejected numerous proposals submitted by Arab states and neutral mediators that could have led to a peaceful solution.¹⁷

This official interpretation of history forms the essence of the Israelis' understanding of their state. Until today, the notion of an Israel that faces an awesome enemy is still spread, in particular by the Netanyahu government, which never fails to use this foregone conclusion to full advantage. All activities of Israel are portrayed as measures of self-defense of a people struggling for its very survival. With this, Israel automatically has right on its side, regardless of the extent to which its actions violate International Law.

By the time of the 1949 cease-fire, 750,000 Palestinians had fled. The UN passed various resolutions pertaining to the return of the refugees, but Israel refused to allow them to return, and until today, they are living in refugee camps throughout Jordan, Gaza, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank, and elsewhere in the Diaspora. Of the 550 abandoned Palestinian villages, including their cemeteries, only 121 were not totally destroyed, the goal of the Israelis being at the time to wipe out any evidence of a Palestinian history. Jewish immigrants were settled in the remaining villages, where 200,000 of their number found apartments waiting for them. In the collective memory of the Palestinians, these events are manifested as the 'Catastrophe' (*An-Naqba*).

¹⁷ See Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*. Cambridge, 1987; Simcha Flapan, *Die Geburt Israels – Mythos und Wirklichkeit*. München, 1988; Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947-1951*. London, 1992; Finkelstein, op.cit. (see footnote 10), p. 51ff. Another good overview is provided by Kenneth Lewan, "Der israelische Historikerstreit", in: *Das Argument* (1997), 221, p. 545.

The tension in the country remained after Israel's victory in the War of 'Independence', due, in part, to the proclamation of martial law on 21 October 1948, which permitted the military administration to control and restrict the freedom of movement of the Palestinians in central Israel. No Palestinian was able to leave his place of residence or district without the prior permission of the military governor, and Galilee alone was divided into more than 50 military districts. The military regime proved to be a very efficient control instrument because it split the Palestinian community. Moreover, Israel enforced the emergency regulations of the British Mandate period, which revoked the rights of the Palestinians. The Israeli Palestinians soon realized that they were second-class citizens.

The 'Absentee Property Law' of 1950 had even more devastating effects than the military regime, as it declared the Palestinians 'absentees' whose property would be administered by the Custodian of Absentee Property before being made private Jewish property or State property. This law permitted the State of Israel to confiscate land from Palestinians who had left Israel, as well as from those who had stayed. "He was present, because he was there, and absent, because he was not there."¹⁸ It has been estimated that according to this law, which reads like something out of a science-fiction paperback, half of the Palestinian population in Israel fell under the category of 'absentee'.

By 1953, some 370 Jewish settlements had been built, 350 on land declared as abandoned, and by 1965, the Absentee Property Law and various other laws had facilitated the confiscation by the Israeli Government of almost three million acres of Palestinian land, 60 percent of which belonged to 'absentees'. Some Palestinians were offered compensation according to the 1953 law regulating land purchases, but the payments were so low that most refused them.

The passing of the Law of Return of 1950 and the Law of Nationality of 1952 likewise contributed to the discriminatory manner in which the Palestinians were treated. The disintegration of the Palestinian entity further advanced with the Jordanian annexation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 1949; meanwhile, the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian administration.

¹⁸ Yoram Kaniuk, "Vergleichende Studie über den Umgang mit dem Schmerz", in: Kaniuk, Y./Emil Habibi, *Das zweifach verheißene Land*. München, 1997, p. 100.

2. The Middle East Wars

In Western written history and journalism, including the daily news reports, the Middle East wars are always presented as pure wars of defense in which Israel was obliged to protect itself against Arab aggression. The United States and Germany, in particular, are countries where such a one-sided perspective dominates. Israel, until today, has always pursued imperial interests; even the Israeli scientist Israel Shahak supports the thesis that his country pursues hegemonic goals all over the Middle East.¹⁹

The reports concerning the Suez Crisis and the Sinai campaign of 1956 require certain corrections. The Egyptian President, Gamal Abdul Nasser was clearly a nationalist and a Pan-Arabist, but he was neither a war-monger nor an anti-Zionist. After coming to power, his primary aim was to modernize Egypt and to counter the foreign influence. The most visible sign of this was the nationalization of the Suez Canal after the withdrawal of the British troops from the canal zone.

In February 1955, Israeli forces attacked locations in the Gaza Strip, killing some 40 Egyptians. Until late 1956, the Egyptians themselves had repeatedly attacked Israel from the Gaza Strip, killing over 430 Israelis. Nasser considered the Palestine problem an international conflict and was of the opinion that the British Government wanted to force him, through the Israeli attacks, to join the Baghdad Pact. He opted for a policy that advocated a peaceful solution for the Question of Palestine through the United Nations and attempted at the same time to reach through mediators a *modus vivendi* with Israel. Later, Nasser declared repeatedly that he had no military ambition *vis-à-vis* Israel but merely wanted to loosen the imperialistic grip of the Western powers on the Arab World. However, instead of seeking a compromise with Egypt, Ben Gurion decided together with the former colonial powers France and Britain to put an end to the anti-colonial policy of Nasser. The goal of this joint armed conflict was on the one hand to overthrow the progressive Egyptian regime and, on the other hand, to procure recognition of Israel from the Arab states. This pact between Israel and the imperialistic powers France and Great Britain completely discredited the country in the Arab World and contributed considerably to the radicalization of the Arab states.

The Sinai Campaign began on 29 October 1956, the external reason being at the time the blockade of the Strait of Tiran at the exit of the Gulf of Aqaba and the closing of the Suez Canal to Israeli ships and ships destined for Israel. Together with France and Great Britain, Israel attacked the Egyptian

¹⁹ See Israel Shahak, *Open Secrets. Israeli Nuclear and Foreign Policies*. London, Chicago, 1997.

positions in the Sinai. Five days later the war was over, the Sinai and Gaza Strip having been occupied by Israel and the approach to the harbor of Eilat freed. Due to pressure from the Soviet Union and the United States the defeat was diplomatically disguised: Sharm Esh-Sheikh was put under UN control despite Egyptian resistance, while the United States guaranteed Israel that although Israeli troops had been forced to withdraw from the conquered territories, the Gulf of Aqaba would be considered international waters through which all ships could pass "freely and undisturbed." For Israel, this was a diplomatic victory; for the Arabs, a military defeat. The Arab neighbors interpreted the Israeli attack as evidence of the Israeli desire to expand and as posing a substantial threat to themselves, especially since there were ever-increasing voices in Israel calling for an Eretz Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates.

There are also different opinions regarding the assessment of the Six-Day War of June 1967. The majority of German historians support the thesis that Israel was fighting a preventive war; however, documents that have recently been made accessible by the Israeli Government point more to a deliberate Israeli war of aggression. That the state was "encircled by Arab armies ready to attack" is one of the legends pertaining to the wars led by Israel.

According to statements of Israeli politicians and military personnel, there was no acute danger of Israel being dragged into a war. Then Israeli Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin "did not believe that Nasser wanted war... The two divisions that he had sent to Sinai, were not enough for an offensive. He knew this and we knew it too." Abba Eban added: "Nasser did not want war, he wanted a victory without war." In his memoirs, Eban admits that Israel was not in great danger and that the situation had improved on a daily basis. In addition, General Matti Peled admitted in 1972 that the alleged 'deadly' danger purportedly faced by Israel was a "bluff," and that Israel, since 1949, had never been in a "deadly situation."²⁰ In *Le Monde* of 3 June 1972 he explained: "All those stories about the huge danger we faced due to the smallness of our territory only emerged once the war was over. They did not play any role at all in our deliberations prior to the eruption of hostilities. To pretend that the Egyptian army, which stood at our borders, would have been able to endanger the existence of Israel insults not only everyone who analyses the situation, but also, primarily, the Israeli army." And Ezer Weizman, today's President of Israel, said in the *Ha'aretz* of 29 March 1972, "that there was never a danger of destruction. This possibility was never considered in the meetings." General Haim Barlev, quoted in *Ma'ariv* on 4 April 1972, put it this way: "On the eve of

²⁰ To these expressions see Finkelstein, *op.cit.* (footnote 10), p. 123-149.

the Six-Day War there was never the possibility of genocide and we never considered such a possibility." The former Housing Minister Mordechai Bentov said on this issue in *Al-Hamishar* of 14 April 1971: "All the details of the whole story of a danger of destruction were made up and exaggerated in order to justify the annexation of Arab land." Yigal Allon admitted that he and Begin "wanted Jerusalem." Begin wrote in the *New York Times* of 21 August 1982 the following: "In June 1967 we had another opportunity. The concentration of Egyptian troops in the Sinai was not evidence of Nasser's readiness to attack us. We have to be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him." In addition, Air Force General Mordechai Hod said: "Sixteen years of planning entered in those crucial 80 minutes. We lived with the plan, we slept over the plan, and we consumed the plan. We continuously perfected it."

Why did the Israelis decide on a 'preventive war', although there was no 'deadly danger'? At the time, there was massive public support for a war, considered an opportunity to 'liberate Jerusalem and the West Bank'. The CIA, at the end of May 1967, was convinced that Israel could end a war within a few days. For then US Defense Minister Robert McNamara the only question was whether the war would last five or ten days; therefore the US gave the Israeli Government the green light for an attack at the beginning of June. The White House dispelled the Israeli fear that the country would not harvest the fruits of victory like in 1956. In order to defeat the purpose of the Egyptian Vice-President reaching a diplomatic solution in Washington, the Israeli army executed its preventive attack against Egypt, thus making pointless the planned visit scheduled to take place two days later.²¹ With their espionage ship US Liberty, which they anchored 15 miles from the coast, the Americans wanted to discover whether the Syrians had deployed troops on the Golan. On 8 June, Israeli combat aircraft attacked the ship with the intention of sinking it; the ship did not sink, but the communication center was destroyed.

In the Six-Day War Israel was driven by motives similar to the ones that drove it during the Suez Crisis. Its primary target was to hit the center of radical Arab nationalism while also destroying the main arms depot of the Egyptian regime. A third intention was to crush Syria and Jordan as states. Its main aim, however, was to destroy any manifestation of Arab radicalism, or more concretely, to prevent independence and modernism as long as possible. This was exactly the role the United States had assigned Israel in its global strategy, i.e., to fight any form of Arab nationalism, as Noam Chomsky once put it in an interview with the author.²²

²¹ Ibid.

²² See interview with Noam Chomsky in: *Freitag*, 1 August 1997. See also the long version in the English original, in: *Challenge*, VIII (1997) 4, p. 6-7.

The security argument is also used to explain the attack on Syria and the conquering of the Golan Heights, and frequent references are made to the fact that the Syrians occasionally shot at the *kibbutzim* located at the foot of the Golan, forcing their inhabitants to spend many of their nights in shelters. This interpretation dominates until this day.

However, an interview published on 27 April 1997 in *Yediot Aharonot*, conducted by former *Ha'aretz* journalist Rami Tal with Defense Minister Moshe Dayan on 22 November 1976 and 1 January 1977, reveals the same motivation. Dayan reported that on 8 June 1967 a delegation of kibbutz members had come to Jerusalem in order to persuade the government to attack the Golan. Dayan's answer then was that "the Syrians on the fourth day of the war were not a threat to us." Eighty percent of the incidents began as follows: "We would send a tractor to plow some place where it was impossible to do anything, in the demilitarized area, and we would know ahead that the Syrians would start shooting. If they did not start shooting, we would inform the tractor to progress farther, until the Syrians, in the end, would get nervous and would shoot. And then we would use guns, and later even the airforce, and that is how it went." This game was played by all commanders, including Zvi Tzur and Yitzhak Rabin.

After the War of 1948 and the cease-fire agreement, Israel never considered the lines as being permanent. Said Dayan: "We thought then, and it continued for quite some time, that we could change the lines of the cease-fire accords by military actions that were less than a war. That is, to seize some territory and hold it until the enemy despairs and gives it to us. It definitely may be said that there was a certain amount of naivete on our part, but you must recall that we did not have the experience of a state."

Contrary to Dayan's claim that only Syrian troops were deployed on the Golan, some 120,000 Syrians lived there at the time in 272 towns and villages. "The *kibbutzim* there saw the good land for agriculture, on the banks of the Jordan Valley and the Dan, and the Hula, and the Kinneret, and dreamed of it. And you must remember that this was a time when agriculture had a holy value and agricultural land was considered the most important and most valued thing." Asked whether the *kibbutzniks* wanted the land, Dayan replied: "I am not saying that. Sure, they wanted the Syrians to disappear from sight. They suffered greatly because of the Syrians ... The Syrians opposite them were soldiers who shot at them, and they certainly did not like this. But I can tell you with absolute certainty: The delegation that came to convince Eshkol to go up to the Golan Heights did not think about these things. They thought about the land in the Golan... I saw them and I spoke with them. They did not even try to hide their lust for that ground. That is what guided them."

Dayan added that he knew from the beginning of the war that Israel would conquer a large area of land but would have to return most of it for the sake of peace. "Because I looked with a *kibbutznik's* eyes, and I knew that the moment we would be on the Golan, they would start taking the land. And when there are settlements, you don't come down. This was our strength in the War of Independence, and it is always a strength, but it disturbs making peace."²³ For Dayan, the decision to have Jewish settlers affiliated with Moshe Levinger settle in the heart of Hebron was a 'disaster' for it put insurmountable obstacles in the way of reaching a just peace with the Palestinians. He once said he had not resigned because he thought the settlers would withdraw one day; that they are there until today is due to Yigal Allon, who was in principle against everything that came from Dayan.

For the Arab World, this defeat was a catastrophe. In the course of the Six-Day War, hundreds of thousands more Palestinians had to flee and the war resulted in renewed expropriation and more injustice. For the Palestinians the defeat was the continuation of the Catastrophe of 1948. Despite the enormous territorial gains, Israel had won a 'Pyrrhus Victory' as Dan Diner put it. Only after these events did the long-forgotten refugee problem reach a global dimension. Israel's victory also provided a basis for the resurgence of the religious forces in Israel. The Middle East conflict - as being presented until today - was born.

The Israeli victory in the Six-Day War resulted in not only new political questions and problems but also a religious dimension, which increasingly imposes an existence question for Israel. The Israeli Right saw the victory as a divine reward for the Jewish people. The spiritual leader of the religious-nationalist ideologists was Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Hakoen Kook. Brought to the Wailing Wall upon the request of soldiers, he declared: "We herewith announce to the people of Israel and the whole world that our heavenly mission has just returned us home to our holy mountain and our holy city. We will never leave it again." From the basis of this victorious euphoria, the ideology of the so-called *Eretz Israel Hashlema* (Greater Israel ideology) was developed, which declared the country holy. From this point onwards, the nationalists and the religious called the West Bank Judea and Samaria, and with the coming to power of the government of Menachem Begin in 1977 their influence increased enormously. It was this ideological environment that produced the murderer of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

²³ Both interviews with Moshe Dayan are in: *Journal of Palestine Studies* (JPS), XXVII (Autumn 1997) 1, p. 144-149; extracts can be found in *Challenge*, VIII (1997) 4, p. 14ff.

After the war, the Israeli Government did not attempt to use the territories as security for potential peace negotiations. Egypt and Jordan tried to reach a peaceful reconciliation. However, all negotiations were blocked after the Arab countries decided on the three 'No's' during their meeting in Khartoum, where the PLO made its first big appearance, in August 1967: no to peace with Israel, no to negotiations with Israel, and no to recognition of Israel. The PLO rhetoric regarding the destruction of the 'Zionist structure' harmed the Palestinian and Arab cause, and although the Palestinians were still far away from carrying out their threats, Israel cleverly used this rhetoric again and again to explain its hard-line attitude. The Supreme Commander of the UN, Odd Bull, assumed that the reason for the rhetorical excesses of Khartoum was the Israeli intention to annex the territories:²⁴ a thesis that appeared very daring at the time.

On 22 November 1967 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 calling on Israel to withdraw from all occupied territories. The Israeli Government tried to balance the meaning and consequences of the resolution by interpreting it very cleverly. A contradiction was created between the English and the French text: the English reading "withdrawal from occupied territories," the French, "withdrawal from the occupied territories." All other official translations speak unambiguously about "the occupied territories," from which Israel had to withdraw in accordance with International Law.

The Israeli Government used the following three arguments for maintaining the *status quo*: that Israel needed strategic depth for security reasons, that it wanted to take economic advantage of the occupied territories, and that the West Bank, from an ideological point of view, was historic Jewish soil on which the Jews had to settle. Israel wants to possess these territories forever but minus the original indigenous population. With the help of the Oslo Accords, it might succeed. It maintains control over the land, contains the Palestinians in reserves and orders PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat with his police and security services to watch over them, control them and, if necessary, suppress them.

The humiliation the Arabs suffered because of the Six-Day War, Israel's refusal to withdraw to the borders of 1967, as well as the terror attacks and airplane hijackings of the PLO, prepared the ground for a new armed conflict between the hostile parties. On 6 October 1973, the day of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) - the highest holiday in Judaism - Egypt and Syria attacked Israel in a concerted action. Despite the initial success of the Arab forces, the Israeli troops managed to proceed into Egyptian

²⁴ See Odd Bull, quoted in: Finkelstein, op.cit. (footnote 10), p. 152.

territory beyond the Suez Canal as well as reach a point only 32 kilometers away from Damascus. After the Soviet Union threatened to use nuclear weapons, American Foreign Minister Henry Kissinger forced the Israelis to agree to a cease-fire on 24 October 1973, and the negotiations began on 11 November 1973 at milestone 101 in Egypt. The war was a turning point for the relations of the Arab states with Israel and resulted in questions concerning the myth of the invincibility of the Israeli army. In Resolution 338, the UN Security Council called on the parties to the conflict to work towards a just and lasting peace within the framework of UN Resolution 242. This and other measures were accompanied by the proclamation of the oil embargo against Israel-friendly states on 16 October 1973.

Despite the victory, nothing could hide the fact that the Israeli Government had actually failed. When an inquiry commission blamed the government for being badly prepared for the attack, both Prime Minister Golda Meir and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan resigned. They were replaced by Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, but the younger guards of the Labor Party could not stop the demise of the party; several scandals and internal party crises led to the victory of the national-conservative Likud bloc in the parliamentary elections of May 1977.

3. The Domestic Turning Point in Israel

The election of the national-conservative Menachem Begin as Prime Minister was to have more of an effect on Israel than 30 years of Labor Party administration. Begin, the former commander of the underground organization Etzel and founder of the Herut Party, appointed - to everyone's surprise - Moshe Dayan as Foreign Minister and stressed his desire for peace. In his government declaration, Begin clarified that for him there was no Palestine but only Eretz Israel, reaching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River. He wanted to obstruct the way for any future independence and statehood for the inhabitants of 'Judea', 'Samaria' and Gaza through an intensive settlement policy in all parts of Eretz Israel; for Begin, as a revisionist, the right of survival of the Israelis was more valid than the Palestinians' right to their homeland.

The settlement policy became the main preoccupation of his government, which cooperated, if not competed, with Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful), a nationalist-religious settler movement that was founded in 1974. The hard core of the Gush Emunim settlement movement was inspired by intense hostility *vis-à-vis* the Arabs, and even today its members, all of whom are enthusiastic supporters of the Greater Israel ideology, reject any

form of compromise with the Palestinians. The Gush Emunim settlements soon became centers of the extreme Right, which is characterized by two ideological pillars: a xenophobic nationalism directed against the *Goyim* (non-Jews) in general and the Arabs in particular, and religious mysticism. Among the figureheads of the Gush from the very beginning were Rabbi Moshe Levinger and the recently deceased Minister of Environment, Zevulun Hammer. Their spiritual leader was Zvi Yehuda Kook himself, who justified the settlement policy with his Greater Israel ideology.

Equipped with 'religious legal titles', they also settled in the central parts of the Palestinian land in accordance with the Sharon Plan, which foresaw the division of the West Bank into seven Palestinian enclaves and the Gaza Strip into four, all under Israel's sovereignty. The intention was to move a wedge into the residential areas of the Palestinians. None of the Arab built-up areas were to be inhabited by more than 100,000 people, and in all, no more than 15 percent of the occupied territory was earmarked for Palestinian residential developments. Through its settlement policy, which resulted in the construction of paramilitary, nationalist-religious suburban settlements, Israel created facts that make a return of the occupied territories in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank impossible.

Moshe Dayan only accepted the position of Foreign Minister in Begin's Cabinet because he was assured that he could execute a peace initiative. In October 1977, Dayan met with King Hussein of Jordan in London. Another meeting took place in 1977, this time between Egyptian Vice-President Hassan At-Tuhami and Dayan, in Morocco. On 19 November that year, Egypt's President Anwar As-Sadat visited Jerusalem and gave a speech in the Knesset, stressing the following three points:

- There cannot be a separate peace between Israel and Egypt.
- Israel must leave all territories occupied in the War of 1967.
- The core problem is the Palestinians. In the absence of a just solution, there will never be peace in the Middle East.

In September 1978, Israel and Egypt concluded a skeleton agreement in Camp David in the United States, the signing ceremony of which took place in Washington on 26 May 1979. The agreement states among other things the following: "Peace requires respect of sovereignty, of territorial integrity, and of political independence of all states in the region and their right to live in peace within secured and recognized borders without any threat or violence." With regard to the Palestinians, the following diplomatic remark is made: "The result of the negotiations must also recognize

the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and its justified needs." Israel withdrew in two stages from the Sinai, leaving the city of Yamit and 20 other settlements. The Palestinians as well as Syria, Libya and Algeria rejected the agreement.

The journalist Adel S. Elias sees the 1979 negotiation success of Israel in the following way: "It is the huge tragedy of the Palestinians and a perfidious irony of destiny that it was Arab Egypt in particular that helped the Zionist ideology and its arrogance of power reach such a overwhelming triumph."²⁵

Even in the Camp David Accords, Israel was only prepared to grant the population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip limited autonomy. Then, like today, it did not want to discuss sovereignty or a state for the Palestinians. As Begin put it: "We have a right to and demand sovereignty over these areas of Eretz Israel. This is our land; it rightfully belongs to the Jewish nation."

When Ronald Reagan succeeded unlucky Jimmy Carter as President of the United States in 1980, the Middle East conflict was pressed into the East-West scheme. Reagan and his Foreign Minister Alexander Haig were fiery anti-Communists, and they consequently allowed Begin and Ariel Sharon to involve them in a pro-Israeli policy. Israel sold the planned invasion of Lebanon in the year 1982 to the United States as a war against the 'Communist' PLO and the 'Communist' leftist forces of the country. The Israeli Government wanted the PLO and the Lebanese Government to get angry with one another, allowing it to force a 'new order' on a new, convenient Lebanese government. Moreover, under the slogan "Peace for Galilee", Sharon wanted to destroy the PLO.

This deliberately planned war led to a disaster and to the biggest anti-war demonstrations Israel had ever seen. Approximately 400,000 people protested against their own government, condemning it for permitting the Maronite militia to massacre over 700 Palestinians living in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila. Altogether, some 17,824 people died during the war, mainly civilians. The United States participated in the invasion by sending so-called 'peace troops' who fired at Druze villages in the Shuf mountains from their position in the Mediterranean. The Americans paid a high price for their involvement: the Druze and Shiites treated the Americans as collaborators with Israel and thus, as enemies of the Leba-

²⁵ Adel S. Elias, *Wer wirft den letzten Stein. Der lange Frieden im Nahen Osten*. Düsseldorf et al., 1993, p. 389.

nese, and in October 1982, Lebanese suicide commandos blew up 241 American and 58 French soldiers.

The Israelis also suffered high casualties. After the war, an Israeli investigation commission determined that Defense Minister Sharon was largely responsible for the Israeli losses, which forced him to resign, although Begin kept Sharon in his cabinet but as Minister without Portfolio. The General Chief of Staff at the time was Raphael Eitan; both men now hold the position of minister in the current government of Benjamin Netanyahu. On 30 August 1983, Begin resigned from his position as Prime Minister; he had not been himself since the death of his wife in 1982 and, now increasingly dependent on strong medication, he was often unable to govern. Begin was succeeded by Yitzhak Shamir. When, in September 1984, Likud and Labor built a national unity government coalition, Shimon Peres became the new Prime Minister.

In 1985, Israel withdrew from Lebanon but erected in the south of the country a 14-kilometer so-called 'security zone', which was controlled by the South Lebanese Army (SLA). The SLA is becoming an increasingly unreliable partner, and Israeli failures are most likely due, at least in part, to the double role the SLA militias are playing. The 'security zone' did not bring Israel security. On the contrary: since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, some 1,232 Israeli soldiers have been killed there, including 589 who were killed following the creation of the zone, and the firing at Israeli positions in Northern Israel has never stopped. The Shiite 'Warriors of God' are supported in their actions by the Christian Lebanese.

The joint struggle of the United States and Israel against the alleged 'Communism' caused the groups previously fighting each other in Lebanon move closer together and the Druze, Shiites and Palestinians to lean more upon Syria. The 'new order' of Sharon turned out to be a disaster for Israel, whose only real 'success' was the withdrawal of the PLO from Lebanon. The PLO was not, however, totally defeated, and it turned the withdrawal from Lebanon into something of a media spectacle, with Arafat appearing to leave the battlefield in Lebanon - the mission having been accomplished - as a victorious commander-in-chief.

On 1 September 1982, President Reagan announced his Middle East Peace Plan, calling for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Lebanon and Palestinian self-administration in the occupied territories in cooperation with Jordan. Begin totally rejected the plan.

The occupation of Lebanon has not paid off for Israel. The war-like acts of retaliation, such as the invasion in July 1993 when the Israeli army

expelled more than 500,000 Lebanese towards Beirut, or the act of retaliation of April 1996 that ended with the murder of 120 women and children at a UN position in Qana'a, contributed to the defeat of Shimon Peres in the Israeli elections of that year whilst revealing that the liberation struggle of the Hizbollah was more than just 'terrorism'.

After the latest debacles and the high losses of the Israeli army in Lebanon, the voices in Israel pleading for a unilateral withdrawal increased. The 'Four Mothers Movement' staged several protests, during which its followers addressed the question of Israeli Government responsibility. The 'security zone' is gradually turning into Israel's new Gaza, and Israel appears ready to unilaterally withdraw from the area, having realized that such a move would deprive Syria's President Hafez Al-Assad of his most important card, since Damascus puts considerable pressure on Israel through the Hizbollah.

4. The Palestinian Struggle for an Independent State

As mentioned before, the 'Zionist land grabbing' and the military confrontations between Jews and Palestinian Arabs led to the mass expulsion of the latter. The United Nations took care of the refugees through the UNRWA, but many of their original aspirations soon faded from their minds. Only with the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 16 June 1964 in Cairo – and later, the Six-Day War of June 1967 and the subsequent resistance of the Palestinians – did the plight of the Palestinians infiltrate the consciousness of the world public. The struggle of the PLO against Israel was from the beginning characterized by a certain unwillingness to compromise; it was a kind of 'zero-sum game', in which the success of one side would be at the expense of the other.

The basis of this strategy of confrontation was the Palestinian National Charter of 1968 in which the PLO denied the State of Israel the right to exist. Until its expulsion from Lebanon in 1982, the PLO carried out many terror attacks against Israel, Jewish establishments abroad, and Jews in the Middle East and in other countries, including Germany (e.g., during the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972, or the hijacking of the Lufthansa plane *Landshut* to Mogadishu), all of which were intended to help force the 'Zionist structure' to disappear. This strategy of violence has done great damage not only to the interests of the Palestinians, but also to the perception in the West of the Arabs in general. Moreover, it is partly responsible for the 'concept of the enemy Islam'.

Besides this line of terror, the PLO also followed a diplomatic track. On 13 November 1974, Arafat addressed the UN General Assembly, but only after the UN was forced to move from New York to Geneva when Arafat was unable to obtain a permit to enter the United States. The speech was a diplomatic success, taking into consideration that the US and Israel reject until today the Palestinians' right to self-determination and to an independent state, and that both states voted against the PLO simply because it was – and indeed, remains – the symbol of Palestinian nationalism. The strategy of terror and diplomacy seemed to bear fruits; on 7 August 1981, the Arab League adopted with an overwhelming majority the plan of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to exchange 'land for peace'.

Following the expulsion of the Palestinians from Lebanon in 1982, it became clear to even the last Palestinian that the conflict could only be solved using a two-state approach, since a bi-national state – though a reasonable, low-cost option – was as far as Israel was concerned, totally out of the question. Still, after its expulsion from Beirut, the declared goal of the PLO was the liberation of Palestine. Israel and the United States denounced this as pure terrorism. Such a propagandistic interpretation had nothing to do with the political reality, yet the world public did not repudiate it. After the invasion of Lebanon the Begin government succeeded in portraying all subsequent acts of resistance as terrorism, and this was generally accepted. No one even thought about condemning the horrendous violence of the State of Israel against civilians in Lebanon or the occupied territories, and certainly not about calling it 'terrorism'.

In fact, for decades, many observers, mainly in the West, saw the PLO only as a terrorist organization. For the Palestinian, however, it remained a liberation movement that aimed at – and succeeded in – bringing together the Palestinians scattered in many countries. The PLO became the institutional incorporation of Palestinian nationalism and consciousness, both of which were boosted significantly by the battle at Karameh, a Jordanian village, in March 1968, during which the Palestinian *fedayeen* (those prepared to sacrifice themselves in the name of their country) succeeded in killing 32 Israeli soldiers, even though 124 of their number were also killed. This 'psychological victory' had internal and organizational consequences. For example, Ahmed Shuqeyri, President of the PLO, was forced to resign on 24 December 1968 and was temporarily replaced by Yahya Hamuda, who took over the presidency of the Executive Committee until he was succeeded by Yasser Arafat in February 1969.

Under the umbrella of the PLO, numerous groups were organized, fighting together in a people's liberation war against the Israeli army. This strategy could not be maintained for long, and the *fedayeen* eventually

retreated to neighboring countries. It soon became obvious, however, that the PLO, under the leadership of Fatah, did not have control over all member groups, and in mid-1969 the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), led by Nayef Hawatmeh, split from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) of George Habash.

When the *fedayeen* established themselves in Jordan as a power that publicly challenged King Hussein, the situation became so tense that King Hussein set his soldiers upon them without any mercy in what came to be known as the 'Black September Massacre'; an 'orgy of retaliation' that left 3,000 PLO fighters dead. Even after the massacre the actions of the DFLP and PFLP did not stop. Consequently, in July 1971 the PLO militias were completely crushed and expelled from Jordan. With this major setback, they lost their most important base in their struggle against Israel.

Until the mid-1970's, Israel was able to maintain a public image of a 'liberal occupying power'. The policy of Defense Minister Moshe Dayan aimed at allowing the people to continue with their former lives as far as possible, meaning tensions and conflicts were to be avoided, and every form of resistance was suppressed. Dayan's policy, the goal of which was to make the people 'feel' the occupation but not see it, appeared to bear fruits: until the mid-1970's there was no remarkable resistance in the Palestinian population centers, the economic situation was satisfactory and the few Jewish settlements that existed were rather remote. However, with the change of government and the coming to power of the Likud bloc, not only the style of occupation changed but also the mood amongst the population.

The land expropriations and the systematic construction of new roads in violation of International Law were adequate proof that Israel intended to keep the territories permanently. This was apparent in the frank confession of a representative of the military government, made in 1980, in which he said that he was not interested in improving the situation of the people but in their emigration. The policy of non-involvement was exchanged with a carrot and stick policy, i.e., nationalists were punished, while those who were willing to cooperate were rewarded. The Palestinian self-administration structures were systematically dissolved, and all the mayors elected in 1976 were dismissed. The general population was also exposed to the arbitrary measures of the military authorities, which turned any request into a run with the gauntlet. It is Israel's humiliation, degradation and repression of the Palestinians that should be considered the cause of the *Intifada*, the Palestinian uprising against the Israeli occupation, which broke out on 9 December 1987.

The *Intifada* was no remote-controlled initiative from Tunis or Damascus, and it took the PLO by surprise as much as it did the international experts. Neither the shooting death of two Palestinian students at Birzeit University in December 1986 nor the kamikaze action of an activist from the PFLP General Command in the Galilee on 25 November 1987, in which six Israeli soldiers were killed, should be regarded as the events that triggered off the uprising since both actions had no visible aftereffects in the occupied territories. The *Intifada* began as a spontaneous reaction of a suppressed people. It was the misery, the fear of deportation and land expropriation, the aggressive settler behavior, the desperation felt as a result of the camp war among Palestinians in Lebanon, and the hatred of the occupying power that made the life of the Palestinians increasingly unbearable and left them feeling that they had nothing left to lose but their oppression and humiliation. On 8 December 1987, an Israeli military vehicle crashed into several Arab cars near the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, killing four Palestinian workers and seriously injuring several others. Three of the killed men were from Jabalia, the largest refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. It was suggested that the 'accident' was an act of retaliation for the murder of an Israeli businessman, Shlomo Tahal, by the Palestinian unit 'Force 17' on 6 December 1987 in Gaza, and the funeral of the three Palestinians, held the day after the incident, turned into a huge demonstration against the occupation. When, one day later, on 10 December, 15-year-old Hatem As-Sissi was shot in the heart and killed in Jabalia, the uprising was given its first 'martyr'.

In the days that followed, the protests spread rapidly, first to the other refugee camps and then to the larger towns and cities of the West Bank. Basically, they were nothing but demonstrations. According to scientist Alexander Flores: "Had the army not interfered, nothing would have happened."²⁶ The Israeli army was intent however on breaking up every demonstration, and it did so in an extremely brutal manner. The Israeli Government was unable to come up with a political answer and chose, instead, to order the use of teargas, rubber bullets, nightsticks, and live ammunition - one order of then Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin was "Break their bones" - and within only a few days, the uprising had several new martyrs. The Israeli measures, intended to deter the Palestinians, led to an escalation in the violence, and it was only a matter of days before the entire Gaza Strip and some West Bank refugee camps had joined the uprising. Two weeks into the uprising, the Fatah-PLO with its youth organization *Shabiba* took over the leadership, and when four PLO groups formed the 'Unified Leadership of the Uprising' (UNLU), they called, in January 1988, for a 'war of the people' involving not firearms but a 'hail

²⁶ Alexander Flores, *Intifada. Aufstand der Palästinenser*. Berlin, 1989.

of stones, Molotov cocktails and iron sticks' against the Israeli authorities. Liberation was to be achieved through civil disobedience; parallel to this, a political, social and economic infrastructure was to be created and the Israeli economy boycotted.

The *Intifada* was the biggest political and military challenge to have ever confronted the State of Israel and its army. The identity crisis of the army, which first became apparent with the disaster in Lebanon, worsened with the *Intifada*, and acts committed by the army against unarmed civilians contributed not only to the alienation between the army and the general population but also to the erosion of the troops' morale. Until today, the consequences of this disintegration are evident: suicides, drug abuse, legal offenses and the instances of soldiers refusing to serve in the army are increasing, with the number of suicides exceeding in recent years the casualties in battle.

At the time it broke out, the *Intifada* was a people's movement, which tried to separate the occupied territories as much as possible from Israel and to promote the idea of self-sufficiency in order to prepare the population for a period of long-term resistance. The Palestinians wanted to liberate themselves from their dependence on Israel and in the early stages, the *Intifada* was very successful in this particular respect. With the boycott of Israeli goods, the mass resignation of Palestinian policemen and tax collectors and the destruction of the network of collaborators and spies a gradual dissociation from Israel was achieved.

At the same time, however, the *Intifada* also resulted in great losses for both the parties involved in the conflict: more so in the case of the Palestinians, but certainly, also in the case of the Israelis, who suffered considerable economic losses. The *Intifada* had a tremendous effect on the lives of all Palestinians. On the one hand, their standard of living deteriorated; on the other, their national consciousness was strengthened, but although the people were originally full of hope because they truly believed that the uprising would bring them liberation and an independent state, the only real success the *Intifada* brought about in the long term was the increase in global consciousness concerning the tragedy of the Palestinian people. The myth of a beleaguered and threatened Israel, supposedly always the victim of the aggression of its neighbors, was finally destroyed. The roles had changed, and the small David of 1967 was now regarded as what he had become in 1988: a well-armed Goliath, who was being confronted by a stone-throwing David. Thus, the public perception of Israel's role had changed from that of a 'victim' to that of a guilty party. The *Intifada* also had disastrous effects on the self-image of the Israelis, who tried desperately to rationalize the uprising as a war in order to 'justify' the killing

and beating of so many innocent civilians before their own eyes and those of the world. The Israeli war machinery was completely helpless in facing non-violent resistance. Israel realized where the 'ethic borders' of the use of violence stood. Despite the much-improved Palestinian image, the *Intifada* failed, because it did not manage to transform the Palestinian institutions. Nevertheless, even the brutal behavior of the Israeli army did not succeed in suppressing it.

It was in August 1988 that Israel came with a new initiative outlawing membership in the committees that supported the organizational structures, which had a negative impact on the mainspring of the *Intifada*. On 31 July 1988, King Hussein of Jordan had disengaged from the West Bank, and under the pressure of the *Intifada*, the PLO now publicly accepted the two-state model. On 15 November 1988, the 'Palestinian National Council' (PNC) proclaimed the independent state of 'Palestine' in Algiers, but this final diplomatic breakthrough was doomed to failure, since the United States and its Western European allies refused to recognize the 'phantom state'. At the same time, the PLO also recognized UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and called for the solution of the Palestinian refugee problem on the basis of International Law. It furthermore renounced terrorism as a political means, thus indirectly recognizing the right of Israel to exist within the borders of 1948.

Although the Palestinians were ready to coexist peacefully with Israel - a decision that was welcomed by the international community - the Israeli Government made it clear that it did not want to be recognized by the 'terror organization', the PLO, as it was aware that the recognition would deprive it of its most useful and effective propaganda instrument. Israel had no interest whatsoever in entering into negotiations with the PLO on the return of the occupied territories, and the PLO's declaration was denounced as a tactical move which was intended to conceal the old goal - the destruction of Israel. The Israeli Likud-Labor coalition government, led by Yitzhak Shamir, offered the Palestinians a peace initiative with free elections and limited autonomy, but his offer was rejected.

Against the background of the *Intifada*, two new antagonists - more dangerous than the PLO had ever been - emerged to play a leading role: Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) and the Islamic Jihad. Israel had not only tolerated Hamas in the Gaza Strip, considering it a counterweight to the PLO, but had also fostered its emergence ideally and financially. Only later was Israel to realize that this was a perfect example of jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. But what, exactly, is Hamas, whose successes, like those of the other Islamists, are the price that was paid for the political, economic and moral failures of the old elites?

In its charter of August 1988 Hamas describes itself as a "wing of the Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine." The Moslem Brotherhood rejected the armed struggle and initially played a positive role in building a social and religious infrastructure. Only in the course of the *Intifada* did main parts of the movement become more radical and establish, under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, Hamas. In its charter, the organization advocates a "Holy War" against the "Zionist invasion" (Article 7) and a uniform Islamic Palestine (Article 11), to which Israel also belongs, thereby implicitly questioning Israel's right to exist. The Islamic Jihad, which developed out of a splinter group of Hamas, is a more radical variant of the organization, acting from small, independently acting cells.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad are responsible for many terror attacks against Israeli targets in which innocent Israelis were killed. Both organizations reject a Western-style social system and call for a system based on Islamic Law, the *Shari'a*. According to their ideas, democracy has no foundation in the *Qur'an*; on the contrary, from their perspective, democracy contradicts the only legitimate sovereignty, the one of Allah. They are supported by donations from Palestinians in the US and Europe as well as Saudi Arabia. It cannot be said for certain that Iran supports these organizations financially.

The Middle East did not lie outside the scope of the revolutionary changes that occurred in the year 1990 and afterwards. The Palestinians under the leadership of Arafat failed at first to realize this and backed - misjudging the political balance of power - the dictator Saddam Hussein during the second Gulf War. When the Palestinians cheered on the scud missiles as they traveled from Baghdad to Israel, the mistrust and suspicion directed against them increased. However, is it not true that the entire Israeli society cheered on the American attack on Iraq? Was it not the Israeli Government spokesman who demanded from the US that it "show Saddam Hussein no mercy"?²⁷ The world public opinion did not condemn these comments, and once again, the Palestinians became the victims of the double standards of the West, which also saw nothing wrong in the fact that the bombs the Americans dropped over Iraq equaled seven Hiroshima bombs and killed some 150,000 Iraqis.

While Amos Oz painted the ghost of a "second Auschwitz" on the wall, Yossi Sarid wrote the following in *Ha'aretz* in 1991: "Compared to the crimes of Saddam Hussein the sins of the Israeli Government appear white like snow. However, I still support their [the Palestinians'] right to

²⁷ See Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Rise and Fall of Palestine. A Personal Account of the Intifada Years*. Minneapolis, London, 1996, p. 82.

self-determination and an independent state because it is my own right to be rid of the occupation and its negative effects. Perhaps they deserve the occupation; we, however, do not deserve it." Was Sarid suggesting that perhaps the occupation was a stroke of luck for the Palestinians and did not damage their society in any way? Since when is the occupying power the one who suffers? The defenselessness of Israel, imposed by the Americans, had deeply shaken the State of Israel's understanding of itself. For the first time, Israel was confronted with a situation that contradicted its State doctrine of self-defense. Abroad, the attack on Israel caused a flood of solidarity rallies, many of which were characterized by the collection of large amounts of financial aid. Who could forget the trips to Israel of German politicians with checks in their luggage? For Israel, the Gulf War was definitely a 'moral upgrading'.²⁸

For the PLO and the Palestinians in the Arab states the defeat of Saddam Hussein was a severe setback. Some 350,000 Palestinians were thrown out of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, which - with payments to Arafat now halted - also brought about the financial ruin of the PLO. With this, Arafat's organization was politically, economically and morally at the end of its tether.

In Western diplomatic circles the defeat of Saddam Hussein had nurtured the hope that the Middle East could be 'arranged' more satisfactorily; US President Bush in particular talked about a 'new world order,' meaning sole American dominance and hegemony. The United States believed that it could solve the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian problem without the participation of the international community of states; certainly, the American Foreign Minister James Baker brought new meaning to the term 'shuttle diplomacy' with his frequent visits to the various countries in the region. The Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnych also took part in this but his role was limited to that of an assistant to the US because the days of the Soviet Union were already numbered. Despite considerable resistance on the part of the Israeli Government, American diplomats succeeded in issuing invitations to a peace conference at the end of October/beginning of November 1991 in Madrid.

²⁸ Norbert Mattes, "Einleitung", in: Mattes, Norman (ed.), *Wir sind die Herren und ihr unsere Schutzhüter - Der Nahe Osten vor und nach dem Golfkrieg*. Frankfurt a.M., 1991, p. 15.

5. From Madrid to Oslo

The Madrid 'Peace Conference', which was held under the chairmanship of the US and the Soviet Union, gathered on 31 October and 1 November 1991 for the first ever time delegations from Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, including Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. All were striving to achieve an end to the conflict. The actual goal of the United States was not to facilitate the normalization of their relations, whereby Israel would only be one state among others, but rather to have Israel play a hegemonic role within the region due to its stronger economic basis. Nevertheless, Bush succeeded in winning the support of the Arab states because they were now far more dependent on the United States than they had ever been before. On 6 March 1991 the American President voted in the Congress for a "comprehensive peace based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338" and the principle of "land for peace." His speech as well as his letter to the Palestinians of October 1991 in which the United States administration came out against the "expansion of settlements" enabled Arafat to win PLO Executive Committee support for the Madrid formula. Edward Said saw in this a "betrayal of our history and our people."²⁹

Behind the scenes there was a major struggle taking place concerning the composition of the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, with Israel refusing to accept Palestinian delegates from East Jerusalem in order to demonstrate its claim of sovereignty over the eastern part of the city. In Madrid, where Israelis sat for the first time at one table with the Syrians, Jordanians, Lebanese and Palestinians, no progress was achieved.

The head of the Palestinian delegation, physician Haidar Abdul Shafi, did, however, make a very important speech, part of which reads as follows: "We, the people of Palestine, stand before you in the fullness of our pain, our pride, and our anticipation, for we have long harbored a yearning for peace and a dream of justice and freedom. For too long, the Palestinian people have gone unheeded, silenced and denied, our identity negated by political expediency, our right to struggle against injustice maligned, and our present existence subdued by the past tragedy of another people." In his speech, Abdul Shafi tackled all the problems that were of major concern to the Palestinians: the status of Jerusalem, the political prisoners, the Israeli settlement policy, Israel's lack of respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the right to self-determination and an independent state.

²⁹ Edward W. Said. *The Politics of Dispossession. The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994*. London, 1995, p. xxxii.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir repeated well-known formulas concerning the catastrophe of the Holocaust, the 4,000-year-old Jewish presence in Palestine, the Arab hostility, the terror of the Palestinians, and the refusal of the Arab states to recognize Israel's right to exist. Shamir denied that the conflict was primarily about land, saying that allowing the talks to concentrate exclusively on the land issue would be the fastest way to reach an impasse. He demanded confidence-building measures first and warned of the dangers of looking for quick solutions.

Abdul Shafi responded to Shamir's speech as follows: "To be honest, our Palestinian delegation came here to confront you with a challenge: to introduce ourselves as human beings and to recognize you as human beings in order to overcome the fetters of the past and to lay the foundation stone for peace, the framework of which is formed by reciprocity, openness and recognition." For those Israelis who still viewed the Palestinians as 'terrorists', these words were certainly a provocation. The subsequent ten rounds of negotiations between the delegations in Washington did not bring any progress, with the participants finding themselves stuck in questions pertaining to procedures. In the occupied territories the misery spread further, the disillusion of the Palestinians grew, and their negotiators quarreled with each other. Yasser Arafat played an unclear role.³⁰

Yitzhak Shamir said later that he had been prepared to spend another ten years negotiating in Washington until the continuation of Israel's various policies had ensured that there was nothing left to negotiate on. The Shamir government's refusal to impose a halt on settlement activities made the United States suspend an already promised US\$10 million loan for the integration of Soviet Jews and support the Labor Party Candidate, Yitzhak Rabin, who promised the Israeli peace, during the elections in June 1992.

Those who thought that the negotiations in Washington would progress faster after the change of government in Israel were disappointed. The repression of the Palestinians even increased after Palestinians murdered several innocent Israeli civilians. In December 1992, the Rabin government ordered the deportation of 415 alleged Hamas 'terrorists', who were expelled to the Hermon Mountains in South Lebanon in the middle of the night. The draconian measure had a long-term negative effect on the image and policy of Israel.

The author, referring to the deportation of the Hamas members, commented as follows in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 24 February

³⁰ See Adel S. Elias, *Dieser Frieden heißt Krieg. Israel und Palästina- Die feindlichen Brüder*. München, 1997.

1993: "The real scandal is the justification by the Supreme Court of Israel." The Fourth Geneva Convention primarily prohibits mass deportations, which resulted in the High Court judges playing a sophisticated trick and turning a mass deportation into a massive 'deportation of individuals', which it then declared legal. Half of the deportees were allowed to return after a few weeks, the others a year later. With this, the principle of deportation was sanctioned, as Yitzhak Rabin remarked quite proudly after his negotiations with President Bill Clinton in the United States. The deportees - some of whom were supposedly 'trained' by the Hizbollah to carry out suicide attacks - made the most of their situation, presenting themselves every evening to the media. The UN Security Council demanded in its Resolution 799 the immediate return of the deportees and that Israel respect the Fourth Geneva Convention and put a stop to this and similar measures of collective punishment. Although Israel once more ignored the decision of the United Nations, the United States failed to take any steps.

With the total closure it imposed on 30 March 1993, which is still in effect, the Israeli Government wanted to stop would-be assassins entering Israel once and for all. The closure was to have disastrous effects on the social life of the Palestinians: the occupied areas were divided into four cantons - a northern and a southern West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip - which resulted in the restriction of the Palestinian economy, the health care and education systems, and the freedom of movement and worship. Since the closure was imposed, only a few Palestinians have succeeded in obtaining entry permits to reach Jerusalem, their political and cultural center, and even doctors are prevented from entering the city.

With the rise to power of Yitzhak Rabin, the relation with the United States relaxed. Yitzhak Shamir had refused to agree to a halt to settlement, thereby forfeiting US\$10 million for the integration of Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union. Rabin, on the other hand, instantly ordered that no new settlements - excluding settlements that were necessary for Israel's security - would be constructed, although the completion of settlements then under construction and the expansion of existing ones was still allowed. Nevertheless, the Labor Party succeeded during its four-year term in office to increase the number of settlers in the occupied territories by 50 percent, and since the Rabin government was considered a 'left' one, to do so without it resulting in any protests by the world public. Why then should Netanyahu not pursue such a successful expansion strategy? The protests against his settlement policy are hypocritical and reveal double standards regarding moral values. The expansion of settlements has always been argued for using security pretexts in an attempt to give the colonization of another people's country some plausibility. All Israeli governments

knew that these settlements would be a main obstacle in the search for any future peaceful solution.

When the Hizbollah fired Katyusha rockets at the north of Israel in July 1993, Israel responded by launching massive attacks on the whole of Lebanon. Rabin cynically announced and executed 'Operation Accountability' of July 1993, having decided that the best way to put pressure on the Lebanese Government was to disperse the civil population, and the attacks by Israeli aircraft made 500,000 Lebanese flee to the north of the country. Wolfgang Guenther Lerch commented on this episode in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, calling it "state terrorism." Uri Avnery, then a member of the Knesset, called it the "most cruel... and maybe most pointless" war Israel had ever led. "The Israeli Government has never led a war whose official aim was to entirely expel the civilian population," said Avnery in *Der Spiegel*. He was not alone in his condemnation: for the first time ever, Israeli columnists depicted such a goal as war crimes.

At the time of the attack, Arafat's delegates had already entered negotiations in Oslo on the modalities and security arrangements pertaining to possible Palestinian autonomy, and by mid-August 1993, rumors had spread that the secret negotiations had resulted in Israel agreeing with the PLO upon partial autonomy for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank city of Jericho. The agreement came as a complete surprise to both the public and the other Arab delegations in Washington, which the PLO had deliberately not put in the picture. Only when the PLO delegation set out for the 11th round of talks were PLO officials in Tunis informed. In her autobiography, Hanan Ashrawi, who was a member of the Palestinian delegation, provides some interesting details about the euphoric, unrealistic viewpoint of the Palestinians around Arafat.³¹

Since January 1993, Israeli and Palestinian delegates had been attempting to negotiate an agreement during 14 meetings held in Norway, the first contacts having been established between Yair Hirshfeld and Ahmad Qrei'a (Abu Ala') in London, with Ashrawi playing an indirect role in realizing this first encounter.³² Ron Pundik and Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) discussed economic issues. Only in March 1993, after Shimon Peres sent his deputy Uri Savir and the Legal Advisor of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Joel Singer to join the talks, was any real progress made.

³¹ See Hanan Ashrawi, *Ich bin in Palästina geboren*. Berlin 1995.

³² See Marek Halter/Eric Laurent, *Unterhändler ohne Auftrag. Die geheime Vorgeschichte des Friedensabkommens zwischen Israel und der PLO*. Frankfurt a.M., 1994, p. 34-50.

The Declaration of Principles (DoP) includes many positions that had already been formulated in the Egyptian-Israeli Camp David Accords; for example, the 'limited authority' of the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which had been repeatedly rejected by the Palestinian delegation in Washington upon Arafat's order. The head of the PLO was horrified by the suggestion that the Palestinians should live in a 'bantustan' or face the same fate as the Indians in North America, but it is exactly this status to which the Palestinians were reduced in the agreements. It is almost frightening to realize the extent of the naivete and incompetence displayed by the Palestinian negotiators in their meetings with the Israeli professionals.³³ Not only were the negotiations conducted in English - a language of which neither Arafat nor his delegates had a sufficient command - but also, the Palestinian delegation had no legal advisor at their side.

The agreement, known as the 'Declaration of Principles for Interim Self-Rule', was signed on 13 September 1993 on the White House lawn in Washington. In an impressive ceremony, Yitzhak Rabin spoke of the end of bloodshed after one hundred years, while Shimon Peres drafted the vision of a 'New Middle East' - which turned out to be just like the old one. Arafat, meanwhile, thanked everyone for practically surrendering almost all the rights of the Palestinian people, and all the while, Bill Clinton posed like a Roman emperor leading two hostile vassals through a ritual of obedience and homage.

The optimistic tone of certain parts of the proceedings was not justifiable. The speech of Shimon Peres is a good example. Said Peres, "What we are executing here today is more than the signing of an agreement. It is a revolution... We want a change from gun bullets to election ballots, from weapons to spades. We will pray with you. We will offer our help in order to create wealth in Gaza and make Jericho prosper again." Peres then introduced prophecy into his vision by saying, "This ought to be a new creation. We must create a new community on our old soil; a New Middle East for the people, a Middle East for the children... Let us reject hostilities, and may there be no more victims on either side." Much more realistic was Yitzhak Rabin who spoke about the victims of violence, the suffering of families and about Jerusalem as the "eternal capital of the Jewish people." His speech was not visionary at all, but sober and primarily directed towards the Israeli population: "We have come from a people, a home, a family that has not known a single year, not a single month, in which mothers have not wept for their sons.... We say to you today in a loud and a clear voice, enough of blood and tears. Enough!" It was a speech that should have been given by Arafat, since it was the Palestini-

³³ For the history of these bilateral negotiations see Elias, op.cit. (footnote 30), p. 15- 52.

ans who had been reduced to the status of instigators of 'terrorism' and 'violence' through the agreements. In contrast to the two speakers that preceded him, Arafat - who did not even mention the Palestinian victims - not only appealed to the United States and the international community for help, but also to "God, the Most Merciful." Perhaps he instinctively suspected that the new road on which the Palestinians and Israelis had set out would not be an easy one as he spoke the words, "We are relying on your role, Mr. President, and on the role of all the countries that believe that without peace in the Middle East, peace in the world will not be complete." Arafat clearly still had faith in the United States and in its role as the 'honest brokers' in the conflict.

The DoP was in fact nothing more than a document of capitulation, a "Palestinian Versailles," as it has been referred to by Edward Said, in spite of the fact that the Palestinians around Arafat and those dependent on him talked about a "victory." The agreement has not put Palestine back on the map of the Middle East as euphorically stressed by Arafat in Washington, only a hideous caricature. The same illusion was evident in an interview with Nabil Sha'ath, in which he expressed expectations that were pure fantasy, and which, of course, could not be met by the document. The negotiation delegation in Washington knew nothing about the Oslo track or the text, and the accord says nothing about the return of the 1948 refugees.³⁴

The head of the Palestinian delegation Haidar Abdul Shafi presents a completely different opinion with regard to the level of knowledge concerning the Oslo negotiations: "We are not responsible for the mistakes in this agreement. There is nothing that we have discussed that could have led to such concessions. On the contrary: we have pointed to the central issues in question on which we had to remain firm."³⁵ Arafat clearly did not listen. In the *tageszeitung* of 8 December 1993 Abdul Shafi speculates that he might have been afraid of the minimum requirements. The peace process was not the beginning of the Palestinian emancipation process but the beginning of its end, because the suppressed legitimized the suppressors before the occupation as such ended. Comparisons with the independence of Algeria, Vietnam or South Africa are therefore not tenable; these countries won real independence, while the West Bank and Gaza Strip remained - even after the signing of the various agreements - under Israeli occupation, and military orders, until today, are still in effect. Even the autonomous areas remain in a quasi state of siege, since Israel reserves the right to cut them off at any time or to enter them whenever it perceives a threat to its own security. Moreover, the documents signed offer

³⁴ See "The Oslo Agreement. An Interview with Nabil Shaath", in: *JPS*, XXIII (Autumn 1993) 1, p. 5-13.

³⁵ "The Oslo Agreement. An Interview with Haidar Abdul Shafi", *ibid.*, p. 11.

the Palestinians no protection from Israeli violence or any compensation for all the losses of property and land they have suffered.

The loss of a sense of reality under Arafat's advisors could have been eliminated by looking into the DoP carefully. American Foreign Minister James Baker was much more realistic when he said the following about the essence of the agreement in a television interview: Israel, he said, did not give up anything but its refusal to accept the "PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people." Amos Oz also realized what the central point of the agreement was, as he stressed in an interview with the BBC on 14 September 1993, when he said, "This is the second largest victory in the history of Zionism." Already back in May 1994, the author wrote the following: "This agreement is after the foundation of the State of Israel the biggest success of Israeli diplomacy. It is a superb achievement of Rabin and Peres. Israel did not even have to acknowledge that it is an occupying power."³⁶

What these agreements were likely to mean for the future of the autonomous Palestinian enclaves was clear to anyone who had analyzed the accords, which are pure security agreements that sanction the subjugation of the Palestinian leadership. "Thus, Arafat is forced to quell - jointly with the Israeli army and security service - the resistance against the accords. The consequence of such cooperation could be the restriction of freedom, the suppression of the opposition, that is the *Intifada*, and the opposition against the agreement, and eventually a dictatorship."³⁷

Sober judgments about the peace process have drowned in the general euphoria. On 8 December 1993, Haidar Abdul Shafi said to the *tageszeitung*: "I do not believe that the Palestinian state will ever come into existence." On the Israeli side, there were also some realists. Roni Ben Efrat, Editor-in-Chief of the Israeli magazine *Challenge* passed the following far-sighted judgment in an interview with the weekly newspaper *The Parliament* on 12 November 1993: "The PLO undermined with this agreement its right to an independent state. Arafat has given everything away but has not received anything in return." The Palestinians said 'yes' to something that was 'beyond their minimum demands', especially since there was not even a clear link between the interim and the final stage. "If Israel had any good intentions it would have illustrated some connections between these two phases. The fact that this is not the case and everything is kept open including the time schedule, gives the Palestinians no guar-

³⁶ Ludwig Watzal, "Das 'Gaza-Jericho-Abkommen' - Ein Weg zum Frieden in Israel und Palästina?" in: *Schweizer Monatshefte*, 74 (1994) 5, p. 11.

³⁷ Ludwig Watzal, *Frieden ohne Gerechtigkeit? Israel und die Menschenrechte der Palästina*. Köln, Weimar, Wien, 1994, p. 9.

antees whatsoever for the future. The only change that has occurred is the inclusion of the PLO.

When the contents of the agreement became known, there was immediate opposition: ten opposition groups - among them Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the DFLP, the PFLP, and Ahmad Jibril's General Command - met on 9 October 1993 in Damascus, rejected the plan and declared war on Arafat. Their credo was that the agreement was a "stab in the back of our national struggle" and that they would continue the "armed struggle against the Zionist enemy." Their resistance went as far as Jibril threatening to kill Arafat. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* on 13 September 1993, George Habash, leader of the PFLP, made it unambiguously clear that he would not be satisfied with this "shameful agreement" and put his trust in the *Intifada* as a tool for achieving "freedom, independence and self-determination" for Palestine. Despite this opposition and massive criticism, Israelis and Palestinians continued their negotiations and signed on 4 May 1994 the 'Gaza-Jericho Agreement', which deals with details pertaining to the transfer of authority in parts of the Gaza Strip and the Jericho enclave. The rhetoric of those opposed to the agreement must not be taken too seriously since they are partly based in Damascus where they depend on the goodwill and political calculation of Hafez Al-Assad. Moreover, the opposition front will not go so far as to instigate a civil war among the Palestinians.

The negotiations proceeded very slowly. The delegations were unable to agree on the size of the Jericho enclave, while the opposition on both sides was not inactive. Palestinian terror attacks followed the massacre committed by the physician Baruch Goldstein from the extremist settlement of Kiryat Arba, near Hebron, on 25 February 1994 at Al-Ibrahimi Mosque, where he opened fire on praying Moslems, killing 29. During the subsequent demonstrations Israeli soldiers shot and killed another 29 Palestinians. Instead of prosecuting the perpetrators and evacuating the extremist Jews from Hebron, Israel punished the Palestinian victims in Hebron by imposing a 30-day curfew, which completely paralyzed all life in the city. The Israeli lawyer Felicia Langer commented as follows: "At this point it is important to mention that there were attempts to separate Goldstein's crime from the issue of settlements in the occupied territories, which is within the scope of responsibility of the government, and thus, to clear the government of its responsibility."³⁸ According to Langer, Israel was keen to "disguise the symbiotic relationship between the army and the settlers in the occupied territories... where a system of apartheid prevailed, the last of its kind under the sun."³⁹

³⁸ Felicia Langer. *Wo Haß keine Grenzen kennt*. Göttingen, 1995, p. 60f.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

The fact that the peace process was moving forward slowly did not prevent the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan at the Red Sea on 26 October 1994. Israel's second peace treaty after the Camp David Accords with Egypt regulated, among other things, the following topics: the distribution of water resources, the final borderlines, the common struggle against drug trafficking and crime, environmental questions, and agreements about border crossings between the two countries. Again, the US played a significant role. In particular, it was the waiving of debts in the amount of US\$700 million and the pledge of military assistance that allowed King Hussein to make peace with Israel after a 46-year-long state of war. Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres and Yasser Arafat were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on 14 October 1994 for their achievements. As was widely known, peace had not been achieved in the region, but then neither had the signing of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty for which, back then, Menachem Begin and Anwar As-Sadat had received the prestigious prize.

Despite numerous terror attacks and considerable resistance in Israel, Rabin followed his course of negotiations with the Palestinians unflustered. On 28 September 1995, after tenacious negotiations, the 'Interim Agreement on the West Bank' was eventually signed at the Egyptian holiday resort of Taba. The consequences of the agreements became increasingly clear: the development was not towards a Palestinian independent state but a 'bantustanization', which allowed the *status quo* of the occupation to appear in a legitimate light since the Palestinians had accepted the agreements. The cantonization process is causing the Palestinians to become more and more disillusioned, as the human rights activist Iyad As-Sarraj told the author in an interview.⁴⁰

How controversial an issue the peace process was - and still is - within Israel was demonstrated by the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish fundamentalist on 4 November 1995 at a peace rally in Tel Aviv. The assassination was preceded by month-long smear campaigns led by extremist settlers, radical rabbis and leading politicians from the Likud bloc and the National Religious Party (Mafdal). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was one of the leading participants in this campaign. He attacked Rabin in the Knesset with the following words: "You, Mr. Prime Minister, will go down in history as the prime minister who founded an army of Palestinian terrorists... I charge you, Yitzhak Rabin, with stirring up Arab terror. You bear direct responsibility for the terrible massacre in Tel Aviv. You are guilty. May this blood come over your head."

⁴⁰ See "Eine gewisse Furcht, die Meinung zu äußern". Interview with Iyad As-Sarraj, in: *ai-Journal*, (1997) 9, p 16f.

Netanyahu spoke at many demonstrations where placards declaring Rabin as quasi 'fair game' could be seen, without distancing himself from these. These placards portrayed Rabin as a 'betrayed' and 'murderer', with a Palestinian *keffiyeh*, wearing a SS uniform with a swastika armband or dangling from a gallows, or as 'the Jewish Council of Rabin', while the extremists yelled, "With blood and fire we will expel Rabin."⁴¹ This was clearly an extreme example of slander, considering the fact that some form of collaboration between Rabin and the Palestinians that aimed at the destruction of Israel was implied.

The Israeli right wing tried to put the blame for Rabin's assassination on the Shin Bet, Israel's secret service. One abstruse conspiracy theory, according to which Peres was supposed to have ordered the Shin Bet to use live ammunition instead of blank cartridges, allowing him to become Prime Minister, is way off track. That Avishai Raviv, a contact of the Shin Bet in Israel's right extremist scene and a friend of Yigal Amir, should have informed it about the assassination, does not point to Shin Bet involvement; Raviv identified himself more with Amir's right extremist and racist viewpoints than with those of his commissioners. It is the forces of law in Israel that bear the sole responsibility for the assassination, as it is their agitation and ideological delusion that formed the fertile soil from which Amir's deed emerged.

In Israel, the people did not come to terms with the massacre committed by Baruch Goldstein nor with the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. Both acts can be explained in the Jewish religion, as Israel Shahak had argued convincingly in the Israeli newspaper *Davar* on 8 April 1994. Shahak had predicted the assassination of Rabin. In an interview with the weekly *The Parliament* on 22 August 1997, the historian Moshe Zimmermann said: "Two months before the death of Rabin I wrote an essay in *Ha'arets* entitled 'The Weimar Script on Jerusalem's Wall'. I reacted to an occurrence that was considered insignificant. A young man tried to shove Minister Yossi Sarid aside on the street. This was not seen as an assassination attempt. The intention, however, was very clear. He tried to kill him this way. I did not regard this as a joke and reminded people of the assassination of Walther Rathenau. In an atmosphere in which such words are spoken, turning them into actions is not difficult. Two months later Rabin was dead. If I felt it, there must be others who could have known, too."⁴² Zimmermann added that the Israeli public has not coped well with the assassination.

⁴¹ See Ludwig Watzal, "Mit peitschenden Feuerhieben - Israels Rechte gewinnt an Boden", in: *Lutherische Monatshefte*, (1997) 9, p. 24.

⁴² "Der lange Weg zum dauerhaften Frieden im Nahen Osten führt über Katastrophen. Interview with Moshe Zimmermann", in: *Das Parlament*, 22 August 1997.

Instead of immediately ordering new elections, Shimon Peres tried to develop an image as a determined statesman. The elections took place in May 1996, which left enough time for the extremists to attempt to further discredit the peace process, which they succeeded in doing. Two disastrous suicide attacks by Hamas on 25 February and 6 March 1996 in Jerusalem induced Peres, temporarily, not to make any further concessions to Arafat, and the planned withdrawal from Hebron was postponed to the post-election period. The attacks led to the convention of an anti-terror summit involving heads of state on 13 March 1996 in Sharm Esh-Sheikh, Egypt. The meeting served Peres' image-building attempts in the election campaign more than the fight against terror, since there was no consequent questioning of its roots.

In April 1996, the Hizbollah again fired Katyusha rockets at the north of Israel. There was no real damage, but – with the Israeli elections approaching – Peres had to show his muscles. He ordered the implementation of the military action 'Operation Grapes of Wrath', which ended in disaster for Israel. As usual, the Israeli military bombarded by land and air alleged Hizbollah posts, this time for 16 consecutive days. However, only civilians were affected. A UN base was bombarded by 'mistake', leaving over 120 women and children dead. The UN proved in an investigative report that the Israeli offensive could not be considered a mistake.⁴³ The Israelis dispersed hundreds of thousands of civilians and caused damage in the amount of US\$500 million, strengthening the Hizbollah, which it had sought to destroy, in the process. With the mediation of French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette, the French – much to the anger of the United States – succeeded in reaching an agreement between Israel and the Hizbollah, in which both sides pledged to spare the civil population. The fighting between soldiers and freedom fighters was explicitly accepted.

6. The Election of Netanyahu and the Escalation of the Conflict

The putative trial of strength of the Israeli Prime Minister contributed to his defeat in the elections, and Benyamin Netanyahu won with a small margin of only 29,000 votes. After the massacre of Qana'a in Lebanon, the Israeli Arabs refused to vote for Peres. The Knesset elections revealed a severe swing to the right, and rightwing, religious and nationalistic parties gained considerably. Netanyahu formed a coalition government consisting of mem-

⁴³ See UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon* (for the period from 22 January 1996 to 20 July 1996), S/1996/575, 20 July 1996; amnesty international, *Unlawful Killings During Operation 'Grapes of Wrath'*, London, July 1996; Human Rights Watch/Middle East, "Israel/Lebanon, 'Operation Grapes of Wrath'", in: *The Civilian Victims*, 9 (September 1997) 8.

bers of these parties. Ariel Sharon, Raphael Eitan and Zevulun Hammer became ministers, to name only the most radical ones. Netanyahu is not, as the media tried to picture him, a 'pragmatist', but an 'ideologist' who belongs to the revisionist wing of Zionism. Arafat and the Palestinians should not expect to gain anything from him. One could still see, days after the elections, the shock that Arafat felt as a result of Netanyahu's victory. Consequently, it took months before the two men met for the first time following the exerting of substantial pressure by the United States. During the election campaign, Netanyahu had loudly announced that he would never shake hands with this 'terrorist'. That he eventually did it cannot be interpreted as 'pragmatism'. The peace process, which had already reached a dead end, now came to a total standstill.

Netanyahu's state visits to Egypt, Jordan and the United States showed that he combined conciliation with toughness. Not even the American President could persuade him to make concessions, and eventually he went so far as to expose him publicly at a press conference. In spite of this, the United States still refrained from adopting a truly tough stand, and only succeeded in making Netanyahu re-deploy from Hebron, a move that had already been agreed upon in the Interim Agreement. Even then, Netanyahu insisted on new negotiations concerning the city. The resulting protocol for the redistribution of the Israeli troops was signed on 15 January 1997. In essence, it contained the arrangements already agreed upon in the Interim Agreement. However, Netanyahu needed his own agreement in order to show his constituency a contract that was better than the one negotiated by his predecessors. That the other half of Israel had also now said 'yes' to the peace process – as was euphorically claimed – is only partially true. As the developments since 1993 have shown, the Oslo Accords are one thing and the Oslo process, i.e., the reality, is something else.

Immediately after the elections, Netanyahu made it clear that he was the Prime Minister of Israel and had to represent the interests of his country. He had no desire to fall short of the achievements of the Labor Party, and quickly set about continuing settlement in the occupied territories, with his decision to abolish the freeze on settlement activities causing international protests. Netanyahu showed only very little sensitivity concerning the Palestinians. The permanent humiliation of Arafat and the dirty tricks played on the Palestinian population created great frustration amongst the Palestinians, which exploded with the opening of an underground tunnel along the Wailing Wall in September 1996. In the subsequent war-like confrontations, many Palestinians and several Israeli soldiers were killed. When, in February 1997, the Netanyahu government decided to build a new settlement – Har Homa – on Mount Abu Ghneim, another wave of Palestinian protest followed.

In reaction to the humiliation of the Palestinians, Hamas committed a considerable number of terror attacks - in a café in Tel Aviv, at the central vegetable market and the pedestrian mall in Jerusalem - in which numerous Israelis were killed and hundreds injured, many seriously. The Israeli Government now demanded that Arafat take strong and swift action against the "infrastructure of terror" and crack down on Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. The United States Government, meanwhile, adopted the style of language used by that of Netanyahu. The visit of American Foreign Minister Madeleine Albright on 9 September 1997 left no one in any doubt with regard to the question of whose side the United States had taken, and claims that the Israeli Government had contributed a great deal to the desolate situation were paid little attention. Only in a very restrained manner did the American Foreign Minister criticize the settlement policy of the Netanyahu government. The further talks agreed upon by the parties to the conflict have not brought about tangible results. Following massive pressure on the part of the US on the Netanyahu government, the Wye River Memorandum was concluded on 23 October 1998; however, its stipulations were not implemented by Israel. Only some two percent of the occupied land was returned, in spite of the fact that the Palestinians fulfilled their part of the agreement. For the Palestinians, it does not matter who is the Prime Minister of Israel. A 'state' granted by the Labor Party would comprise 50 percent of the land in question at the most, and 'autonomy' granted by the Likud not more than 45 percent. In both cases, the Palestinians would remain under indirect Israeli occupation. Should it ever come, as planned, to another agreement - for example, on the final status - then the Palestinians will only sign because they have been obliged to give in once more or else been blinded by symbolic gestures.