

Prospects for Palestine

A Radical Rethink

Presentation for B&H PSC 23 May 2002

1. Speaking as individual; stimulate a debate.
2. Outcry against resurrection of fascism in Europe, not least by Jews.
3. What about outpost of Europe in ME – Eurovision song contest? Immune?
4. Certainly not. Fascism: ‘... a political attitude which puts the nation-state or the race, its power and growth, in the centre of life and history. It disregards the individual and his rights, as well as humanity, in the exclusive interest of the nation.’
5. But Israel a ‘liberal democracy’? ‘A form of government ... where the powers of the majority are exercised within a framework of constitutional restraints designed to guarantee the minority in the enjoyment of certain individual or collective rights ...’ 92% of Israel’s land barred to Pals. I conclude: Israel a fascist democracy.
6. Medical profession’s task to manage disease, not eradicate it. Usually judicious minimal intervention sufficient. Occasionally drastic action needed.
7. Parallel of political life. Some political regimes seen as manageable, others as cancerous. Franco was seen as first, Hitler as second, Sharon is regarded as first, Saddam Hussein as second.
8. I agree with principle, but not with all judgements. Zionism cancerous.
9. The Zionist mindset propagated by a powerful élite:

I was brought up in an environment where my Jewishness was emphasised above any other identities, and I was taught to see the destiny of the Jewish people, whom I regard as a nation, as a primary concern in my life. The memory of the Holocaust is an intimately interwoven part of my view of the world, and the cry ‘never again’ has profoundly shaped my political thinking. My attitude to Gentiles is: work with them as best you can, but never trust them. I am not particularly religious but from my childhood I have observed the Sabbath and other Jewish rituals, and on my occasional visits to the synagogue, and especially when I am in Israel, I feel that I belong, that I am at home.

My real religion, the cornerstone of my belief system, the security of my inner being, is Zionism. This amounts to the idea Israel right or wrong. I use every argument I can find to justify Zionism, and I listen to counter-arguments (which I regard as either anti-Semitic, or at best mistaken) only with a view to nuancing our justifications. For instance I answer

criticism of the settlements in Judea and Samaria by pointing out that the Palestine promised as a homeland for the Jews by Arthur Balfour comprised all of what is now Israel, the occupied territories and Jordan.

While I am careful not to speak to the wrong people about these ideas, I believe that Jordan should be the state where the Arabs of Israel (erroneously called Palestinians) should live, while Judea and Samaria belong to Israel and should be Judaised. The recognition of Jordan as an Arab country is our major concession, since the ancient kingdom of Moab extended over much of this country.

Just how the four million non-Jewish population of Israel should be dealt with remains unresolved in my mind, but I foresee a time when it will be reduced to insignificant proportions. Perhaps if we make life uncomfortable enough for them, the Arabs will eventually see the light and leave, particularly if Jordan can somehow be brought under Israeli influence or even control. Perhaps a war will enable large scale deportation. Whatever does happen to the Arabs within Israel's borders today, they will remain implacably anti-Semitic, which means that we will need to seek political arrangements which control them.

I am not unaware that Zionist thinking is seriously out of line with modern ideas of international legitimacy, some of which I accept. My position, however, is (a) that in view of the Holocaust Israel is a special case, (b) that as others do not observe international legitimacy, Israel is not bound by it, (c) that the security of all Jews is of overriding importance, and this depends on the survival of Israel, and (d) Western liberals are naïve about the dangers of Arab and Islamic culture.

I do not expect the Gentile world, which is always prone to outbreaks of further anti-Semitism, to accept these arguments at face value. I therefore recognise the need for an elaborate and deep-reaching system of propaganda. I support the expanding memorialisation of the Holocaust and am fiercely opposed to attempts by other groups to claim their share of victimhood. The Gentile celebration of Jewish identity is also to be encouraged by every means possible.

Fortunately most Westerners are not soft in the head about Arabs and Islam, but we urgently need to educate those influential and possibly well-meaning people who imagine that we can regard Muslims by Western standards. Our democracy compared with their tyranny will be a useful weapon in this regard.

Despite all these strategies, the West cannot quite shrug off its liberal conscience, and indeed there are some self-hating Jews who are in the same boat. These people need to be appeased because they are dangerous to our cause. The ultimate aim of Zionism, that is the establishment of an exclusively Jewish state in the whole of what was mandate Palestine, must not therefore be declared. Instead the idea of a two-state solution should be kept alive, negotiations should be kept in perpetual motion, while we continue redeeming the land of Eretz Israel, creating irreversible facts on the ground.

Of course anyone with an ounce of grey matter will understand what we are about, but so long as the official line is otherwise, and as long as we can keep the Western media in a constant state of fear about being one-sided and anti-Semitic, we have little to worry about. It is all a question of keeping our heads and using the cleverness which is our particular gift as a people. We know that our Western supporters want us to succeed for they are as afraid of Islam as we are. They just need sound-bites for their more liberal constituents. We must play the terrorism card for all it is worth, and deflect all attention away from our long-term plans.

1. A caricature? Yes, but my experience. Dangerously self-contained and self-justifying. Obsessive.
2. US Fundamentalist Christians. US fascism. Support for, or at least acquiesce in, almost any Israeli action assured.
3. Is it alarmist to ask whether whole Pal pop of Israel-Palestine facing dire threat?

SHOW MAPS and TELL ABOUT STORY

What can we do?

1. How can we best help? On medical analogy, we are unqualified to prescribe, and do not hold scalpel. We can only seek to ensure doctor has whole picture.
2. Continue to press for 2-state solution?
3. Assumptions underlying this approach.
 - (a) Israel here to stay. The best to be hoped for: Israel settles for 'secure' borders alongside friendly Palestinian state. Excesses of Zionism will diminish.
 - (b) Viable Palestinian state possible, politically and economically.
 - (c) Other strategies Utopian.
 - (d) Jews and non-Jews cannot live together.

- (e) Israel's moral advantage because of holocaust unavoidable reality. Therefore anti-Zionist approach, like anti-apartheid movement impossible.

Counterarguments and questions

1. Zionism also unbelievably Utopian, and yet has achieved a major part of its objective. Why should we not be as bold?
2. The assumption that Israel will settle down within the pre-1967 boundaries is open to question. There are five reasons for this:
 - (a) Israelis have a justifiable fear of those they have injured. They will always therefore try to extend their borders away from the centre.
 - (b) The Palestinians and other Arab regimes are too weak, militarily and politically, to resist Israeli expansionism.
 - (c) The US is unlikely to restrain Israel, perhaps because the pro-Israel lobby have to a large extent got the US in a half-Nelson.
 - (d) Israel is nervous that attention might focus on its discriminatory policies within its own borders, just as happened with South Africa. There is therefore an advantage in keeping the pot gently boiling beyond its borders.
 - (e) The normal restraint of human decency which eventually leads to states settling down within defined borders seems absent in the case of Israel. It is a county in the grip of a fundamentalist ideology which, like Naziism, cancels out normal humanity. There is a sense of 'in for a penny, in for a pound.' If you have murdered one person, why not one thousand or one million?
3. But assuming some future Israeli administration did at last accept the idea of a Palestinian state, all sorts of questions arise.
 - (a) Would it be economically viable, and if not, on whom would it be dependent? My suspicion is that it would not, and that the sponsor would become Israel itself.
 - (b) Would it be able to defend itself? Certainly not, because Israel would never agree to anything other than a demilitarised state.
 - (c) What would prevent Israel from interfering in the internal affairs of a Palestinian state, either overtly through incursions, or covertly through undercover agents and other manipulations? No doubt there would be international safeguards, but it is not easy to conceive that the international community would rush to Palestine's aid in a crisis. After all, it has never seriously intervened on the Palestinians behalf in the past.

- (d) In these circumstances, is it conceivable that enough Palestinians will sufficiently forget their past dispossession to make them peacefully accept their subjugation? And if not, where does that leave us?
- (e) What would prevent Israel from deporting to the Palestinian state its own Palestinian population? Again, I suspect nothing. Indeed many in the West, whose views are essentially racist, might think it quite a good idea.
- (f) Only drastic demographic engineering could maintain Jewish majority. We should oppose this. If it doesn't happen, Zionism will wither anyway. Why not speed up process?

Is there an alternative?

1. Anti-Zionist movement like anti-apartheid movement.
2. Superior dream: READ: a world in which people from different cultures live together in peace and harmony, a world where pure identities are no longer regarded as obtainable or desirable, a world in which the culture of the other is exciting and not a threat, a world in which we have learnt to live with, and even cherish, a degree of unavoidable anxiety, that is a world which aspires to live without illusion.
3. Need to move boundaries of debate which were fixed to maintain *status quo*. Moral high ground of Zionism needs undermining.
4. Need to confront equation of anti-Zionism with anti-Jewish prejudice. We must hold up banner which declares with Tolstoy: 'We are for the human race.'
5. Outcome of debate uncertain.
 - (a) Perhaps remarkably modern idea of a secular democratic state
 - (b) Perhaps bi-national state
 - (c) Perhaps confederation including one or more adjoining Arab states.
 - (d) Perhaps a two-state solution as a stepping stone. But we should be open about it, not as disingenuous as Zionists.

Objections and Practicalities

1. My view minority one. Not because people disagree with the ideology of what I am saying, but because they consider it impractical in terms of campaigning.
2. I accept importance of a united front.
3. Whatever truth about prospects for a Pal state, we need a Plan B.

Conclusion

1. Not the abandonment – for the time being – of the two-state strategy, but the development of a more deep-reaching critique of Zionism itself.
2. This should undermine the moral support for Zionist expansionism and racism like George Orwell's writing did the British Empire.
3. Persuade powers to apply necessary pressure, incl. military if necessary, to resolve situation. In other words press them to confront decision between medicine or scalpel.