

# **Attempts to Resolve the Intractable Ethnonational Conflict between German Engländer and British in the German Kingdom of Britain**

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(Following reading Kelman, H., 'Group Processes in the Resolution of International Conflicts; Experiences From the Israeli-Palestinian Case', *American Psychologist*, March 1997, 212-220 and Rouhana, N. & Bar-Tal, D., 'Psychological Dynamics of Intractable Ethnonational Conflicts; The Israeli-Palestinian Case', *American Psychologist*, July 1998, 761-770.)

## Background

In order to understand the present *impasse* over the British problem we need to look back at what occurred immediately after the conclusion of the Great Patriotic War. Following the German occupation of most of England in 1940 Winston Churchill was shot for crimes against humanity and King Edward VIII was reinstated as nominal monarch. Officially he ruled over the whole of the old Great Britain, but in reality his limited power related for some years to the area occupied by the Germans at the time of the American brokered cease-fire and subsequent peace treaty of 1941. Roughly speaking England (the incorrect pronunciation 'Ingland' was now dropped) apart from Devon and Cornwall was German, while the population of Scotland, Wales and Devon and Cornwall described itself as British. The ruling elite in England were called Engländer and consisted of a mixture of loyal Anglo-Saxons and Germans. German settlers known as Engländer, many of them from Eastern Europe and Caucasia, some from America, moved in and took the place of those who had left. They naturally spoke a variety of German dialects but the Nationalakademie introduced a series of stringent laws standardising German and prohibiting the use of 'Fremdwörter' by both the settlers and the Anglo Saxons (i.e. foreign words, largely those of Latin origin where there was an Anglo-Saxon equivalent - e.g. 'timid' was banned, 'shy' allowed. Russian imports were also proscribed.)

Northern Ireland had, in accordance with American wishes, been reunited with the Republic. The British Empire was divided up between the Germans and the Americans but the old dominions were treated differently. Following the more comprehensive Treaty of Tokyo in 1942 Canada entered a confederation with the United States and most of Central America, Australia and New Zealand entered a confederation with the Japanese empire which included Manchuria and much of South-East Asia and the remainder of China, under Mae Tse Tung, remained independent. Shortly after Mao entered into a pact with Stalin out of which the Communist Union arose. South America was reunited with the Iberian Kingdom which enjoyed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the Reich. Naturally, however, the Iberians claimed that they should have been awarded the whole of Central America as well, and war between North and South America was never far from the news. It was to the antipodes that most of the English population emigrated under the free-passage scheme introduced by the young minister of race relations, Enoch Powell.

However, during and immediately after the war a very significant proportion of the indigenous population of England moved to the Celtic fringe where a guerilla army was established called the Albion Liberation Organisation. Its object was to 'throw the Germans

into the North Sea' and liberate the homeland. The Americans, who had following the war entered into a strategic alliance with the Germans against the Communist Union tacitly supported German measures against the British who were at that time threatening their Irish client state. They also provided considerable financial and logistical support to the nominally independent English state. In 1960 the Engländer army invaded the remaining part of Great Britain, established military rule there and allowed the establishment of Engländer settlements. However, British attacks on military and civilian targets, as well as other forms of civil unrest, continued, reaching a peak in 1982. It was in these circumstances that the Engländer recognised that peace and security might only be obtainable by some form of negotiated settlement of the British problem.

### Two Different Views of the Conflict

From the German point of view, England, being Anglo-Saxon, clearly formed a part of the Aryan nation which it was destined to rejoin, while the Celtic fringe was the homeland of an inferior people. The German victory in the Battle of Britain was proof of the superiority of the unadulterated German race. Those who left England in 1940/41 clearly did so because they were Celtic or at least had Celtic sympathies, that is they had been a foreign element in the English body politic. England was therefore well rid of them and they would under no circumstances be allowed to return. Those British who had remained and who refused to recognise the new State, might with the passage of one or two generations be absorbed into the new German England, but they were still too imbued with ideas of human rights to be allowed equality. The new improved education system for Anglo-Saxons should with time correct this anomaly. British (the Engländer called them pejoratively 'Ancient British' or 'Celtic') terrorist attacks on military and civilian targets both within the occupied territories and into England were intolerable and wholly unjustified. They were evidence of a primitive form of thinking which more civilised people could not comprehend. The aim in the occupied Celtic fringe must be one of containment of an unruly population of *untermenschen* for only in this way could security be ensured and further *lebensraum* created.

Meanwhile England was held up as a model of the new German-American world order, a place where loyalty to the motherland was paramount, hard work was rewarded, the health of the people was outstanding, unions were abolished, decadent democracy was replaced by a well-oiled administration, and poverty was non-existent. A phenomenal programme of rebuilding took place, slums were torn down and replaced by smart new apartment blocks, and German-style town halls began to appear in every reasonable-sized city. With the blessing of King Edward and his Church of England, and with the full support of the Reich as well as the United States, Engländer had no doubt that they had God and right on their side.

The British saw matters quite differently. From their overcrowded and impoverished settlements among the largely hostile Celts, they regarded the German invasion as contravening all standards of civilised behaviour. They claimed that far from leaving their land voluntarily the British had fled for their lives, often at the wrong end of a barrel, and having heard about the massacre of many of their compatriots. They charged that the occupation of *their* country (by which they meant all of Britain) and the brutal treatment of its indigenous population were gross violations of human rights. For many years they demanded to be allowed to return to their land and an end to unrestricted German immigration into Britain. In their view there was no such thing as an Aryan race, though they

were rather more equivocal when it came to the idea of a British nation. In any case, even if such a race existed, it could not justify the policy pursued by the Germans. As the years passed they conceded the reality of occupation but maintained, naively it may be thought, that the British and the Engländer could live together on equal terms. Still later, recognising the unlikelihood of achieving even this objective, they decided to settle for an independent British state situated in the lands of the Celtic fringe.

### An Attempt at a Resolution of the Conflict

After the death of Hitler in 1965, and under American influence, German and Engländer rhetoric lost some of its shrill quality, and while fascist principles still underlay much of the thinking of statesmen, liberal principles began to reemerge. Lip-service was at least paid, for example, to the concept of settling international disputes by negotiation though privately it was expected that the dominant powers would always get what they wanted by a process of manipulation. This was best achieved if the negotiators on the other side could be removed from the gaze of their own constituency and if they were themselves potential rather than actual current politicians or opinion formers. Based on these principles an attempt was made to resolve the British-Engländer conflict during the eighties.

This conflict came to be seen as ‘an intractable ethnonational conflict’. Such conflicts, while based on real issues of security and identity which needed to be negotiated, were intensified by psychological factors on both sides. A German-American professor of social psychology at Harvard set up a series of problem-solving workshops which were described as ‘intensive meetings between politically involved but entirely unofficial representatives’ of the two sides. They took place ‘under academic auspices and were facilitated by a panel of social scientists who [were] knowledgeable about international conflict, group process’ and the British-Engländer conflict.<sup>1</sup> Funding was provided by the American and German government and most of the social scientists were of German-American origin. It was clear from the beginning that the agenda of the meetings was heavily biased in favour of a resolution of the conflict which endangered the status quo as little as possible and which avoided the exploration of fundamental principles. The participants ‘were encouraged to deal with the conflict analytically rather than polemically - to explore the ways in which their interaction helps to exacerbate and perpetuate the conflict rather than to assign blame to the other side while justifying their own.’<sup>2</sup>

While all this appeared reasonable on the face of it, in practice it meant that the British side were barred from asking the Engländer to acknowledge that an injustice had occurred in 1940/41 or indeed that ever since then their rights had been ignored. For the British this was a crucial point. The academics, however, threw up their hands in horror. ‘Justice,’ they cried, ‘what is justice anyway? It’s merely a social construction. We are here to discuss the resolution of a conflict, not to create more conflict.’ Because they wanted some kind of solution, however meagre, the British reluctantly agreed to play the game by the German-American rules. They were not, however, greatly enlightened by the encounters because they already knew very well what their adversaries thought and were convinced that the Engländer view was profoundly mistaken and wrong. Personally the members of the group enjoyed each others’ company. But when it came to proposals to move forward it

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<sup>1</sup> Citations are from Kelman, op. cit., 214.

<sup>2</sup> Kelman, op cit., 214.

became quite clear that matters would continue to be decided on the basis of power politics. Any suggestions by the British side which involved a radical change of attitude on the Engländer side were described as unrealistic, whereas all the 'demands' on the Engländer side were described not only as reasonable but also as preconditions.

Until the collapse of the Communist Union at around the time of these discussions the British cause had had a powerful champion. Now they were left virtually naked. They mumbled self-consciously about human rights, but ever since Hitler had pronounced such concepts 'strunk'<sup>3</sup> they had never regained acceptance in the West. From the British point of view, then, the discussion simply appeared as an attempt on the Engländer side to paste a fig-leaf over continued aggression towards their people. However they had already conceded too much in good faith to back out, while the Engländer had given away virtually nothing, and in the real-life (but secret) negotiations which followed the British delegates signed away most of their claimed rights in return for a few empty promises.

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#### Some Remarks on the above Scenario

Of course there are many dissimilarities between the above and the Israel/Palestine conflict. I have attempted, however, to capture the basic problem of negotiations between peoples with different strengths of power-base and with causes which are clearly opposite in terms of their moral standing. Edward Said was involved in the discussions which Kelman arranged and commented:

Although I participated in Kelman's meetings (and still consider him a friend) I nevertheless withdrew after 1986. He is undoubtedly an idealist who believed that some, but by no means all the problems separating Israelis and Palestinians went back to difficulties of perception, psychological barriers, and decades of misapprehension and misrepresentation. Therefore for years he undertook to gather these antagonists together under his supervision in order to explore and then to dissipate the misunderstandings and barriers. But there was always some governmental interest in what he and others did who sponsored dialogues of this kind. Often there were US State Department officials present, one of whom I recall was the author of an article provocatively entitled 'Foreign Policy According to Freud'. One of the underlying assumptions seemed false to me, that the struggle over Palestine was principally not a real or material one, but was largely the result of a perhaps tragic, but certainly rectifiable, psychological misunderstanding. In any case I also felt that the idea of an American sponsor or referee who somehow stood outside the conflict and could either manage or observe it calmly was also an ideological fiction. The United States has always been a rejectionist power whose one-sided support for Israel and (until this day) refusal to support Palestinian self-determination made it our enemy. Anyone acting at the behest or with the encouragement of the US government, no matter how idealistic or utopian, was in some way involved in that government's goals, which did not favor Palestinians but rather Israel.

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<sup>3</sup> A reference to Charlie Chaplain's *The Great Dictator*. At one point Hynkel [Hitler] cries out to the crowd: 'Liberty strunk, democracy strunk, human rights strunk!' or some such words.

The other problem that turned me against the meetings was that as the weaker, less organized party, the Palestinians could not really benefit from the uneven exchange. Israelis and Americans, on the other hand, could benefit in two ways. First they could get to know and to a certain extent penetrate Palestinian ranks by slowly changing our agenda from struggle and resistance to accommodation and pacification. [...] The thought that by working out an arrangement [for discussions] whereby the occupation might continue while at the same time a few Palestinians and Israelis could nevertheless cooperate on a friendly basis, struck me as false and misleading.

Can one imagine endorsing similar discussions between a few well-intentioned German and French intellectuals during the occupation of France? Only with great difficulty, but something like this scenario kept resurfacing in the seminars and dialogues, and the Israelis always attached conditions to their recognition of Palestinian rights and the end of the occupation. For years we were told 'recognise Israel and Resolution 242' or 'change the Charter'. There was never any effort made to reciprocate by changing the Law of Return or asking for even the partial demilitarization of Israel. The concessions were most often made by us. We were usually put in the position of being asked to allay the Israeli sense of insecurity, as if the destruction of our society by Israel, the continuing persecution of our people, and the killing of thousands of us did not provide sufficient grounds for nourishing *our* sense of insecurity.

The second way that Israel and the US benefitted from the seminars and dialogues was that they revealed the extent to which Palestinians - disorganised, poorly led, unmobilized - were ready to concede more and more of their strategic goals to something that later came to be called 'the peace process'.<sup>4</sup>

Since Rouhana's first name is Nadim I suppose he may be Palestinian or at least Arab. If so, he is the only one in the bibliographies of both articles, and certainly many of the writers listed there are Jewish. Of course this does not automatically mean that their point of view is biased and it is good to know that these people acknowledge at least to some extent that Palestinians have another point of view which needs to be recognised. But it simply isn't good enough to suggest, as so often happens, that there is no ultimate standard of morality and that each side is right in its own way. Edward Said again:

The US and Israeli line has it that all parties to the Palestinian-Zionist struggle must not dwell on the past since, as some liberal Israelis have put it, it has been a struggle between right and right. This of course is the biggest distortion of all, and has been a central pillar of belief in the tactics of Peace Now and the so-called moderate Labourites. I fail to see how we are supposed to equate the 'right' of a largely European people to come to Palestine, pretend that it was empty of inhabitants, conquer it by force and drive out 70 per cent of its inhabitants, with the right of the native people to resist these actions and try to remain on their land. It is a grotesque notion to suggest parity in such a situation and then also to ask the victims to forget about their past and plan to live together as inferior citizens with their conquerors. The proposition is especially galling since it comes from a movement that claims quite openly never to have forgotten its own history of persecution, and indeed allows

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<sup>4</sup> Said, Edward, *Peace and its Discontents*, Vintage, 1995, 34-6.

itself every crime against the Palestinian people because it says it is living under the shadow of past persecutions.<sup>5</sup>

If we believe in universal human rights then a right is a right. Twisting and turning, as Zionists and their apologists do all the time, is in reality a way of saying that some people are more equal than others.

I do not wish to say that psychology has no part to play in helping us to understand the Israel/Palestine conflict. Some of what these writers say is clearly true and useful. The authors also acknowledge that there are real issues which need to be negotiated and resolved. What I feel is lacking is a recognition of two basic points. The first is that Kelman's workshops were conducted in a space which was far from politically neutral, as the US Information Agency funding that he received should immediately alert us to. And secondly Kelman appears not to believe that there are certain standards of human behaviour which are acceptable and others which are not. Human beings, because they are fallible, will often err, but when they do so they need eventually to acknowledge the error of their ways. It is often said in this context that you should never force people into a corner and that asking them to admit to having committed a crime is counter-productive. While this argument has some force, it is a recipe for continuing conflict and I maintain that on the contrary those who have done wrong do need to be challenged into admitting it. It may be true that diplomacy is required, assurances may need to be given that unacceptable consequences will not follow from admissions of guilt, but in the end one people cannot live in peace with another which had treated it badly until that evil has in some way been acknowledged. In this sense there is little difference between the individual and the political sphere - one thinks of the need of those who have been abused to have their mistreatment acknowledged by the abuser or at least publicly. The Peace and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, whatever its faults, was for this reason an inspired idea.

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<sup>5</sup> Said, Edward, *Peace and its Discontents*, Vintage, 1995, 129-30.