

Palestine/Israel: One State or Two?

Two well-known Israeli peace activists debated whether there should be two states or one state in Israel/Palestine, at an event May 8 in Tel Aviv, sponsored by the Israeli Peace Bloc (Gush Shalom). Speaking for the One-State solution was Dr. Ilan Pappé. Speaking for the Two-State solution was Uri Avnery.

Avnery, 83, is a former Knesset Member, former editor of the weekly *Haolam Hazeh*, and leader of Gush Shalom, the Israeli peace bloc. His personal story, like many of his generation, is a fascinating journey—emigrating from Germany in the 1930s, to the anti-British underground, to the Army, to full-time peace activism and election to the Knesset. Avnery was the first Israeli to meet with Yasser Arafat. His two books tell the story: *Israel Without Zionists: A Plea for Peace in the Middle East* (1968), and *My Friend, the Enemy* (1986). His contemporary writings can be found at www.gush-shalom.org.

Ilan Pappé was born in Israel in 1954, and is well known as a “New Historian” of Israel, who has revised the idyllic accounts of the state’s 1948 founding. His website www.ilanpappe.org chronicles how he became a “New Historian,” the fearful reactions to his views, and his political activities. Among his recent books are *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* and *A History of Modern Palestine*. Pappé is a senior lecturer in political science at Haifa University and the academic director of the Research Institute for Peace at Givat Haviva. He will soon leave Israel to take a position in England at Exeter University.

The moderator, Prof. Zalman Amit, stated at the outset, “I would not be exaggerating in stating that the subject we discuss today is the most important and most difficult question facing people on the left side of the political spectrum, and those whom we could broadly call the people of the peace movement.”

The English translation was provided by Gush Shalom. The debate has been abbreviated here, and subheads have been added. A full transcript can be found at www.gush-shalom.org.



Gush Shalom

Under a banner that reads Gush Shalom (Israeli Peace Bloc) peace activists Uri Avnery (standing at podium) and Ilan Pappé debated the issue of one state or two states for Israel and Palestine, on May 8 in Tel Aviv. At right is the moderator, Prof. Zalman Amit.

Ilan Pappé Speaks for the One-State Solution

I would like to thank Gush Shalom for this event, for the initiative and the willingness to discuss such an important subject in such an open forum. I hope that this is just the beginning of discussing this subject, not a one-time event, since the subjects with which we will deal tonight are vital to us, and clearly a single evening would not be enough to thoroughly discuss them, reach personal and collective decisions, and develop our strategy as a peace camp. Whatever the differences between us, we all belong to the peace camp, the camp which believes in reconciliation between the Palestinian people and Israel, and we all want to work together to promote that cause.

Zionism was born out of impulses. Fair impulses, natural impulses, impulses which can be understood against the background of the period when this movement was born, the real-

ity of East and Central Europe at the end of the 19th Century.

The first impulse was the desire to try to confront the waves of anti-Semitic persecutions and harassment—and possibly also a premonition that there was even worse to come. Therefore, there started a search for a safe haven where European Jews could live without fear for their lives, property, and dignity.

The second impulse was influenced by “The Spring of the Peoples” in the mid-19th Century. The leaders of the Zionist Movement thought that it was possible to redefine Judaism as a nationality rather than only a religion. That, too, was an idea widely circulating at the time, and more than a few ethnic or religious groups re-defined themselves as nations. When the decision was taken—for reasons which there is no time to go into here—to implement these two impulses on the soil of Palestine, where nearly a million people already lived, this reply to impulses turned into a colonial project.

The moment it was decided that the only territory where

Jews could be assured of a safe haven, the only territory where a Jewish nation-state could be created, was in Palestine, this humanistic national movement turned into a colonial project. Its colonial character became all the more pronounced after the country was conquered by the British in the First World War.

As a colonial project, Zionism was not a big success story. When the British Mandate came to its end, no more than 6% of the territory of Palestine was in Jewish hands. Zionism also succeeded in bringing here only a relatively small number of Jewish immigrants. In 1948, Jews constituted no more than a third of the population of Palestine.

Therefore, as a colonial project, a project of settling and displacing another people, it was was not a success story. But the problem—and the source of the Palestinian tragedy—was that the leaders of Zionism did not want only to create a colonial project, they also wanted to create a democratic state. And why was it a Palestinian tragedy that Zionism at its early career wanted to be democratic? Because it still wants to be democratic. Because if you put together Zionist colonialism, Zionist nationalism, and the impulse for democracy, you get a need which still dictates political positions in Israel up to the present. . . .

It is the need to have an overlapping between the democratic majority and the Jewish majority. Every means is fair to ensure that there will be a Jewish majority, because without a Jewish majority we will not be a democracy. It is even permissible to expel Arabs in order to make us a democracy. Because the most important is to have here a majority of Jews. Because otherwise the project will not be a democratic project.

It is not surprising that not far from here, in the Red House on the seashore of Tel Aviv, 11 of the leaders of Zionism gathered in 1948, and decided that if you want to create a democratic state and also to complete the Zionist project, i.e., to take over as much as possible of the land of Palestine, and if you have no majority and you are only a third—then the only choice is to implement an ethnic cleansing, remove the Arab population from the territory you intend for a Jewish State.

Ethnic Cleansing

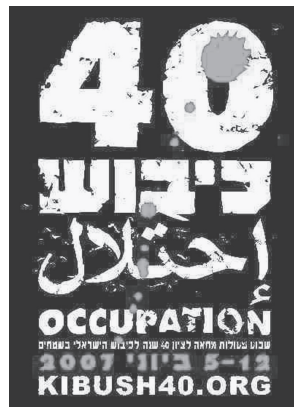
In March 1948, under the leadership of Ben Gurion, the Zionist leadership decided that in order to have a democratic Jewish state here, it was necessary to expel a million Palestinians. Immediately after the decision was taken, they embarked on a systematic expulsion of the Palestinians. Cruelly, they passed from from house to house, from village to village, from neighborhood to neighborhood. When they were done, nine months later, they left behind them 530 empty villages and 11 destroyed towns. Half the population of Palestine had been expelled from its homes, fields, and sources of livelihood—more than 80% of the population in the territory they conquered. Half of the cities and villages of Palestine were destroyed, and their ruins planted with forests or settled with Jews.

The Two-State Solution After ‘40 Bad Years’

The Israeli Peace Bloc’s debate on the subject of a one-state versus a two-state solution for Palestine/Israel is reproduced here to give readers a view of the region that is not generally reported in the Western press. Of special note is the discussion of the ethnic cleansing (of both Arabs and Jews) that occurred in 1948.

The debate comes on the 40th anniversary of the Six-Day War and the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza that followed. Israeli Peace Bloc leader, the 83-year-old soldier and statesman Uri Avnery, recently commented, it’s been “40 Bad Years.”

With the Gaza Strip now blowing up into a manipulated civil war, it is more urgent now than ever that an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement be reached. The debate excerpts here are published in the interest of furthering the chance of such an agreement.



“40 Years Occupation! 40 Years Despair!”: the poster for the week of protest against the occupation, June 5-12.



Rachel Avnery

Barbed war barricade at the Separation Wall being built at the town of Bil'in on the West Bank. Israeli peace activists join with Palestinians at a weekly demonstration here. Soldiers are waiting for the order to attack demonstrators with tear gas, water cannons, and rubber bullets, in March 2006.

This was the only way in which a demographic Jewish state could have been created—the kind of state which is the common rallying call of the Zionist consensus, from then until the present.

Had this act of the Zionist movement taken place now, no international body would have hesitated to label it a crime against humanity. The 11 Zionist leaders who took the decision were, indeed, criminals according to the criteria of international law. Sixty years later, it is a bit difficult to prosecute them, all the more, as none of them is among us any more.

The UN Partition Resolution of November 1947, and the attempts to effect a division of the land after the 1948 War were not based on the ideals of justice—i.e., there is justice and rights to the indigenous people, most of whom had been expelled, and there is justice to the new settlers. No. The basis for the impulse to effect a Two-State solution then, as at the basis of this impulse now, was the idea that the Zionist minotaur could be satisfied by letting the Jewish state have control over only part of Palestine—not the whole.

The UN had proposed giving 50% of Palestine to the Jews. For the Zionists, that was not enough and they took 80% of Palestine, and there was a feeling that that would be enough for them.

But we know that this territorial hunger did not end in 1948. When the historic opportunity came, 100% of Palestine came under the rule of the Jewish state.

But here the great Palestinian tragedy manifests itself once

again. Even after 100% of Palestine became the Jewish state, there was still a real impulse to create and preserve a democratic state. This is the background for the creation of a special kind of peace process, a peace process based on the assumption that the Zionist territorial hunger and democratic wishes can be assuaged by leaving part of Palestine—the West Bank and Gaza—out of Israeli control.

This gives a double profit: On the one hand, the demographic balance between Jews and Arabs is not disturbed; on the other hand, the Palestinians are imprisoned where they would no longer threaten the Zionist project.

But as we know, the situation on the ground became increasingly complicated. . . . Already, in the 1980s, the mantra of the Palestinian state beside the Israeli state—as a good solution to the conflict, or as a way to assuage the territorial hunger of the Zionist movement and preserve Israel as a Jewish state—this mantra was encountering increasing difficulties.

One factor was that the “facts on the ground” were steadily reducing the Palestinian territory, by creating and extending settlements. And from a different direction, there was the natural wish of the political movements to extend the ranks of those who supported the Two-State solution. Gradually, they found new partners, and these new partners gave new meanings to the term “A Palestinian State.” In fact, the connection gradually disappeared between the Two States idea on the one hand and the idea of solving the conflict on the other.

Two States as an ‘Umbrella’ for Occupation

Suddenly, the Two-State solution became a way of arranging some kind of separation between occupier and occupied, rather than a permanent solution which should have dealt with the crime committed by Israel in 1948, with the problems of the 20% of Palestinians inside Israel, and with the refugee population, which has steadily increased since 1948.

In the 1990s, and since the beginning of the present century, the Two-States idea has become common currency. The respectable list of its supporters finally came to include, among others, Ariel Sharon, Benjamin Netanyahu, and George W. Bush.

When your idea gains such adherents, that is far from a bad historical moment to rethink the entire idea. When the Two-States idea became the basis for the peace process, it gave an umbrella to the Israeli occupation to continue its operation without any apprehension. That was because official Israel, regardless of who was Prime Minister, was supposed to

be involved in a peace process—and you can't make criticism of a country which is involved in a peace process.

Under cover of the peace process—you can say, under the cover of the slogan of Two States for Two Peoples—the settlements were extended, and the harassment and oppression of the Palestinians were deepened. So far, that the “facts on the ground” have reduced to nothing, the area intended for the Palestinians. The Zionist racist and ethnic hunger got legitimacy to extend itself into nearly half of the West Bank.

It was impossible to remain unimpressed by the impressive presence of the peace camp in the demonstration in support of Ariel Sharon, at the time of the Gaza disengagement. . . .

On the one hand, this formula makes it possible to continue the occupation by other means, in order to silence the outside criticism of the acts of the occupation. On the other hand, it enabled the state of Israel to create facts on the ground.

In any case, by 2007, you can admit: There is not a single stone visible, in what is now called the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which can serve in the construction of a Palestinian state.

How do you choose to look at this?

If the principle of justice be the basis for those who support the partition of this country, there is no formula more cynical than the Two-State solution, as it is now presented in the peace camp. Eighty percent of the country to the occupier, and 20% to the occupied. That is, 20% in the best and utopian case. More likely, no more than 10%, a dispersed and surrounded 10%, to the occupied.

Moreover, where in this solution do you find a solution for the refugee problem; where will those victims of the ethnic cleansing of 1948 return?

Where will their second and third generation return to, if indeed justice is the guiding principle?

On the other hand, if pragmatism and “realpolitik” be our guiding lights, and all that we wish is to assuage the Zionist state's territorial hunger with a demographic efficiency, why offer only 80%? If brute force alone is to determine the solution, God Almighty, there is no need today to offer the Palestinians even half a percent. . . . If we trust in the international and regional balance of forces as the decisive factor we would give the Palestinians a tiny piece of land, hermetically enclosed with barriers and walls. Because we are not guided by moral principles, we are pragmatic people.

It's true, there are Palestinians in Ramallah who are willing to rest content with that. We know there are, and they deserve to have their voice heard—but it is utterly unacceptable to silence the voices of the Palestinian majority in the refugee camps, in the diasporas, in the Occupied Territories, and among the internal refugees in Israel who want to be part of a state—not a state erected on 20% of the land, but of a future state which will include the whole of the country which was once Palestine. There will be neither reconciliation here, nor justice or a permanent solution, if we don't let these Palestin-

ians have a share in solving the questions referring to reconciliation and to defining the sovereignty, the identity and the future of this country.

Unlike many other groups in the Western world, and possibly against the historical logic of those who were the victims of a hundred years of Zionist disregard, these Palestinians, surprisingly, want to include, in defining the future state, a recognition of the right of the Jews living here to take part in that future. . . .

Let's involve them. Let's respect their aspirations. Let's not say: “It's we who decide, we in Tel Aviv and Ramallah.” No. They decide, too.

Let's at least check the applicability of the idea. At least try out two ideas and give both a chance, the Two-States idea side by side with the One-State idea.

Let's give some respect to the new idea. The old idea, the idea of partition, we have tried for 60 years. The result was exile, occupation, oppression, discrimination. Peace it did not bring. Let's give something else a chance.

Let's not offer drafts of a democratic constitution which would be applicable only to Western Bak'ah [Arab town inside Israel] and say that we don't care about the future of Eastern Bak'ah [originally part of the same town, which is across the line in the West Bank]. Eastern Bak'ah could be imprisoned in an enclave, as far as we are concerned, or languish under a dictatorship. We want Western Bak'ah as part of the state of all its citizens, which we want Israel to become, but Eastern Bak'ah we will leave outside the fence, perhaps under a continuing occupation. How can we?

We have relations of blood, relations of blood and relations of common tragedy which cannot be divided. We are all in one political imbroglio.

The one who expelled and his sons and grandsons, and the one who was expelled with sons and grandsons and granddaughters, all of them together must take part in the negotiations on the future of the entire country.

Political Elites Incompetent and Corrupt

Our political elites are incompetent in the best case and corrupt in the worst, in all that pertains to finding a solution to the conflict. The elites which accompany us in the Western world and the Arab world are just as bad. When these elites masquerade as civil society, simply because there are some politicians who happen not to hold office at a certain moment, the Geneva bubble is floated, and the situation becomes even worse and peace even more far off.

We will find an alternative model. All of us, including the old settlers and the new—even those who got here yesterday—including the expellees with all their generations and those who were left after the expulsions. We will ask all of them what political structure fits all of them, which would include the principles of justice, reconciliation, and coexistence.

Let's offer them at least one more model, in addition to the one which failed. In Bil'in we are fighting shoulder to shoul-

der against the occupation—can we not live together with Bil'in [a Palestinian town] in the same state?...

In conclusion: in order for this dialogue to start and flourish, let's admit one more thing. Let's admit that the occupation which they are increasing daily, we—with all our important efforts—can't stop from here. The occupation is part of the same ideological infrastructure on which the ethnic cleansing of 1948 was built, for which the Arabs of Kufr Qassem were massacred [in 1956], for which lands are confiscated in both the Galilee and the West Bank, for which detentions and killings without trial are committed.

The most murderous manifestation of this ideology occurs now in Greater Jerusalem and the West Bank. In order to stop the extension of these war crimes, the extension of this criminal behavior, let's admit that we need external pressure on the State of Israel. Let's thank the associations of journalists, physicians, and academics who call for a boycott on Israel as long as this criminal policy continues. Let us use the help of civil society in order to make the State of Israel a pariah state, as long as this behavior continues. So that we here, everybody who belongs and who wants to belong to this country, could conduct a constructive and fruitful dialogue.

The aim should be to create a political structure which will once and for all absolve us from the need to live under a conflict, and make it possible to build a better future. Thank you.

Uri Avnery Speaks for the Two-State Solution

It is a great privilege to speak to such an audience, in which there are many veterans of the struggle for peace.

This is not a gladiatorial fight to the death in a Roman arena. Ilan Pappé and I are partners in the struggle against the occupation. I respect his courage. We are in a common struggle, but we have a sharp debate about the way to win it. What do we debate about?

We have no debate about the past. I am wholeheartedly willing to sign everything Ilan said on that. There can be no dispute that Zionism, which had implemented a historical project, had also caused a historical injustice to the Palestinian people. There can be no dispute that ethnic cleansing took place in 1948—though allow me to remark, in parenthesis, that the ethnic cleansing was on both sides, and that there was not a single Jew left residing in whatever territory was con-



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Uri Avnery (left) at "The Ramallah Initiative," an Arab/Jewish peace meeting in Ramallah on the West Bank, Jan. 7, 2007. Representatives of 23 Palestinian, 22 Israeli, and 15 international organizations were present, despite the fact that the Israeli Army had invaded the center of Ramallah the day before, killing four people. The theme of the three-day conference was "a new hope," and participants agreed to set up an "Israeli-Palestinian International Coalition for Ending the Occupation."

quered by the Arab side.

Occupation is a despicable condition which must be terminated. There is certainly no debate about that. We might have no debate about the far future, either, about what we would like to see happening a hundred years from now...

We do have a debate about the foreseeable future. About the solution of the bleeding conflict, within a range of 20, 30, or 50 years. This is not a theoretical debate. You can't just say "Live and let live, each according to their beliefs, and let the Peace Movement live in peace." There can be no compromise between these alternatives, because each of them dictates a different strategy and different tactics. Not the day after tomorrow, not tomorrow, but here and now.

The difference is important. It is crucial. For example: Should we concentrate our efforts in the struggle for the Israeli public opinion, or give up the struggle inside the country and struggle abroad, instead?

I am an Israeli. I stand with both legs on the ground of the Israeli reality. I want to change this reality from one side to the other, but I want this state to exist.

Those who deny the existence of the state of Israel, as an entity expressing our Israeli identity, deny themselves the possibility of being active here. All their activity here is foredoomed to failure.

A person might despair and say that there is nothing to do, everything is lost, we have passed the point of no return. As Meron Benvenishti said many years ago, the situation is irre-

versible, we have nothing more to do in this state.

No Place for Despair

It happens that you sometimes despair. Each one of us had such moments. Despair destroys any chance of action. Despair must not be made into an ideology. I say: there is no place for despair, nothing is lost. Nothing is irreversible, except for life itself. There is no such thing as a point of no return.

I am 83 years old. In my lifetime, I have seen the rise of the Nazis and their fall, the peak of the Soviet Union's power and its sudden collapse. One day before the fall of the Berlin Wall, there was not a single German believing this would happen in his lifetime. The experts did not foresee it—none of them. Because there are subterranean currents which act below the surface, and which nobody sees in real time. That's why theoretical analyses come true so rarely.

Nothing is lost until the fighters raise their hands in surrender. Hands up is not a solution, nor is it moral. In our situation, a despairing person has three choices: (A) Emigration; (B) Internal Emigration, that is to sit at home and do nothing; or (C) Run away to an ideal world of messianic solutions. The third possibility is the most dangerous, because the situation is critical—especially to the Palestinians. There is no time for a solution which will be implemented in a hundred years. There is needed an urgent solution, a solution which could be implemented within a few years—even if it is not ideal.

I heard people say: Avnery is old, he sticks to old ideas and cannot absorb a new one. And I wonder: a new idea? The idea of a Single Joint State of Jews and Arabs was old when I was a boy. It flourished in the 1930s. Among others, it was inscribed on the banner of the movement whose headquarters we meet in today, Hakibbutz Ha'artzi Movement. But that idea went bankrupt, and it was the idea of the Two States which flourished in the new reality.

If I may make a personal remark: I am no historian. I have seen things with my own eyes, heard them with my own ears, felt them as they were happening. As a soldier in the 1948 War, as a newspaper editor for 40 years, as a Knesset Member for ten years, as an activist of Gush Shalom. I am in the thick of things, from different and changing points of view. I have my hand on the public pulse.

There are three basic questions about the One State Idea.



Gush Shalom

Since January 2005, Palestinians and Israelis have joined in protest marches from the town of Bil'in on the West Bank to the Separation Wall.

First: Is it possible at all?

Second: If it were possible, is it a good idea?

Third: Will it bring a just peace?

About the first question, my answer is clear and unequivocal: No, it is not possible.

Anybody who is rooted in the Israeli-Jewish public knows that this public's deepest aspiration—and here it is permissible to make a generalization—the far, far deepest aspiration is to maintain a state with a Jewish majority, a state where Jews will be masters of their fate. This takes precedence over any other wish and aspiration; it takes precedence even over wanting to have a Greater Israel.

You can talk of a Single State from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, define it as bi-national or supra-national—whatever the term used, in practice it means the dismantling of the State of Israel, destruction of all that was built for five generations. This must be said out loud, without any evasions. That is exactly how the Jewish public sees it, and certainly also a large part of the Palestinian public. This means the dismantling of the State of Israel. I am a bit disturbed by the fact that these words are not said explicitly.

We want to change very many things in this country. We want to change its historical narrative, its commonly held definition as "Jewish and democratic." We want to end occupation outside and discrimination inside. We want to build a new framework in the relations between the state and its Arab-Palestinian citizens. But you cannot ignore the basic ethos of the vast majority of the citizens of Israel:

99.99% of the Jewish public do not want to dismantle the state.

There is an illusion that you can achieve this by outside pressure. Would outside pressure force this people to give up their state?... Short of a decisive military defeat on the battlefield, nothing will induce Israelis to give up their state. And if Israel is militarily defeated, our debate will become irrelevant anyway.

Palestinians Want a State of Their Own

The Palestinian People want a state of their own, too. This is needed in order to satisfy their most basic aspirations, the restoration of their national pride, and the healing of their trauma. Even the Hamas leaders with whom we spoke want it. Those who think otherwise engage in daydreams. There are Palestinians who speak of a single state, but for most of them this is simply a code word for the dismantling of Israel. And even they know it is a utopia.

There are those who delude themselves that if they speak of a bi-national state, that would frighten the Israelis so much that they will immediately consent to the creation of a Palestinian state at the side of Israel. But the result will be the opposite. This frightens the Israelis, that's true—and pushes them into the arms of the right wing. This arouses the sleeping dog of ethnic cleansing. About this I agree with Ilan: This dog is sleeping, but it is still there.

All over the world, the trend is opposite: not the creation of multi-national states but on the contrary, the division of states into national units....

There is no example in the world of two different peoples voluntarily agreeing to live in one state. There is no example in the world, except for Switzerland, of a really functioning bi-national or multi-national state. And the example of Switzerland, which has grown for hundreds of years in a unique process, is the exception which proves the rule.

After 120 years of conflict, after a fifth generation was born into this conflict on both sides, to move from total war to total peace in a Single Joint State, with a total renunciation of national independence? This is total illusion.

How is this supposed to be implemented in practice? Ilan did not talk about it....

If that was possible at all, how much time would it take? Two generations? Three generations? Four generations? Can anybody imagine how such a state would function in practice?... Inhabitants of Jenin and of Netanya together formulating a constitution for the state? The inhabitants of Hebron and the Hebron settlers serving side by side in the same army, the same police, obey the same laws? Is this realistic? This is not realistic today, nor would it be realistic tomorrow.

There are those who say: It already exists. Israel already rules one state from the sea to the river, you only need to change the regime. So, first of all: There is no such thing. There is an occupying state and an occupied territory. It is far easier to dismantle a settlement, to dismantle settlements, to

dismantle *all* the settlements—far easier than to force 6 million Jewish Israelis to dismantle their state.

Single State: Occupation by Other Means

No, the Single State would not come about. But let us ask ourselves—should it somehow be erected, would that be a good thing? My answer is: absolutely not.

Let's try to imagine this state—not as an ideal creation of the imagination, but as it might be in reality. In this state the Israelis will be dominant. They have an enormous dominance in nearly all spheres: standard of living, military power, level of education, technological capacity. Israeli per capita income is 25 times—25 times!—that of the Palestinians, \$20,000 per year compared to \$800 a year. In such a state the Palestinians will be “cutters of wood and hewers of water” for a long, long time.

It will be occupation by other means, a disguised occupation. It will not end the historical conflict, but just move it to a new stage. Would this solution bring about a just peace? In my view, exactly the opposite. This state would be a battlefield. Each side will try to take over a maximum of land. Bring in a maximum number of people. The Jews would fight by all possible means in order to prevent the Palestinians from gaining a majority and taking power. In practice, it would be an apartheid state. And if the Arabs do become a majority and seek to gain power democratically, there would start a struggle which might reach the scale of a civil war. A new version of 1948.

Also those who support this solution know that this struggle would last several generations, that a lot of blood might be shed and that there is no knowing the result. It is a utopia. In order to achieve it, you need to replace the people—perhaps the two peoples. To produce a new kind of human being. This is what the Communists tried to do, in the early years of the Soviet Union. Also the founders of the Kibbutz. Unfortunately, you can change many things, but humans don't change their basic nature.

Precisely a beautiful utopia can bring about terrible results. In the vision of “The Wolf lying down with the Sheep” there would be needed a new sheep every day. The Two-State solution is the only practical solution, the only one which is within the bounds of reality. It is ridiculous to say that this idea was defeated. In the most important sphere, the sphere of consciousness, it is growing ever stronger.

After the war of 1948, when we raised that banner, we were a small handful, which could be counted on the fingers of a single hand. Everybody denied the very existence of a Palestinian people. I remember how, in the 1960s, I was running around Washington, talking with people in the White House and the National Security Council. Nobody wanted to hear of it. Now, there is a worldwide consensus that this is the only solution: the United States, Russia, Europe, the Israeli public opinion, the Palestinian public opinion, the Arab League. You should grasp what this means: The entire Arab World now supports this solution. This has enormous impor-



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Thousands of Jewish and Arab protestors marched in Tel Aviv and other Israeli cities June 9 to protest on the 40th anniversary of the Occupation. “Back to the 1967 Borders!”, “Enough of the Occupation, Yes to Israeli-Palestinian Peace!”, “Peace Negotiations Will Prevent War!” , and “Arabs and Jews Refuse To Be Enemies” were some of the slogans. Shauki Hatib, head of the Monitoring Committee, political leadership of Israel’s Arab citizens, was one of those who addressed the crowd. He spoke of how 40 years after the 1967 war, there is “loud talking of a new war, and there is also a rising tide of racist incitement against the Arab population in Israel.... But still, I am optimistic,” Hatib said. “Yes, I am optimistic! The fact that we stand here together in Tel Aviv, thousands of Jews and thousands of Arabs together, united in the struggle against the occupation, is a good reason to be optimistic!”

tance for the future.

Why did it happen? Not because we are so clever and talented that we convinced the whole world. No. The internal logic of this solution is what conquered the world. True, some of the declared adherents are only paying lip service. It is quite possible that they use it to distract attention from their true purposes. Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert pretended to be supporters of this idea, while their true intention was to prevent the abolition of the occupation. But precisely the fact that such people need to resort to such a pretence, that they are now outwardly committed to it, exactly that proves that they realize it would be futile to go on fighting it. When all peoples, the whole world, recognize that this is the practical solution, it would finally be implemented.

The parameters are well known, and about them too there is a worldwide agreement.

1. A Palestinian State will be created, side by side with Israel.
2. The border between them will be based on the Green Line [pre-1967 border], possibly with agreed exchanges of territory.
3. Jerusalem will be the capital of both states.

4. There will be an agreed solution to the refugee problem—that an agreed number will return to Israel, and the others will be absorbed in the Palestinian State or in the present places of habitation, while getting generous compensation, for example, like what the Germans paid us.

I am not against asking the refugees. Let us put on the table the solution which will be agreed upon—a detailed, clear solution, so that each of the refugees would know the choices they could make—and ask them. . . .

In my view the great majority of refugees, if you give them the compensation they truly deserve, the great majority would prefer to stay where they are. Because they have lived there for 60 years already, their sons and daughters got married there, they have opened businesses there.

I think there will remain a problem of some hundreds of thousands for whom a solution will have to be found, and I am in favor of us being full partners and finding a solution. I also don’t think it would be so difficult. When everything else is solved and only the refugee problem is left on the table, the public will agree to a compromise. I think that in a country which already

has a million and quarter Arab Palestinian citizens—and I think it is good that there are—some addition will not make a big difference.

Regional Economic Partnership

5. There will be an economic partnership between the two states, in whose framework the Palestinian government will be able to defend the interests of the Palestinian people, unlike the present situation. The very existence of two states will to some degree diminish the gap in the imbalance between the two sides. This imbalance exists. We can complain about it, we can cry salty tears about it, but this imbalance exists—and we need to find a solution in the real existing world, not in an imaginary world which we would have liked to come into existence. We have to find a solution in the real world.

6. In the longer range, there should be a Middle-Eastern Union on the European model, which might eventually include also Turkey and Iran.

There are big obstacles. They are real. Real obstacles can be overcome. They are as nothing—I want to emphasize this—they are as nothing compared with the obstacles

on the way to a Single State. I would say that it is in the order of 1 to 1,000. Opting for the One State, since it is difficult to gain the Two States, is like being unable to beat a lightweight boxer and therefore choosing to contend with a heavyweight....

There can be no doubt that the One-State Idea gives its holders a moral satisfaction. Somebody told me: Okay, perhaps it is not realistic, but it is moral—this is where I want to stand. I respect this, but I say: this is a luxury we can't afford. When we deal with the fate of so many people, a moral position which is not realistic is immoral. It is important to repeat this: *a moral stance which is not realistic is immoral*. Because the final result of such a stance is to perpetuate the existing situation....

Arafat's 'Benelux' Vision

The first time that I met Arafat, during the Siege of Beirut, he talked of a "Benelux"-style solution....

Arafat meant a triangular alliance of Israel, Palestine, and Jordan, and possibly including Lebanon too. During our last meeting, he still talked of that.

This is, indeed, an important and worthy vision. But meanwhile, we have a patient lying in front of us, a severely wounded and bleeding patient. The most urgent thing is to stop the bleeding, to find a solution which is not ideal, which is real and can be implemented.... On the ground we see that reality is terrible, that it is even getting worse—if that is possible, and we know that it is always possible. We deal with all that every day.

But below the surface other things are happening.

There was a time when 99% of the Jewish-Israeli public denied the very existence of the Palestinian people—now, nobody speaks like that any more.... Now, according to all opinion polls, the great majority in Israel accepts this idea as part of the solution.

When we said that Israel should talk with the PLO, they said we were traitors. Afterwards, the government made an agreement with the PLO. Now we say that there should be talks with Hamas. I am sure that Israel is going to talk with Hamas, and that it will not even take too long before that happens....

Something is changing in this country. The changes in the depth of public opinion are vital on the way to the solution. I think we are winning, I think that the historical development is leading in our direction.

It is not easy, the obstacles are enormous. But I am not mindlessly optimistic. I am optimistic on the basis of reality. I think that we will get to the creation of a Palestinian state, side by side with Israel. And I think that Palestine will be a proud national state.

I know that for many people the word "national," the word "nationalism," are dirty words.... Anybody who ignores the enormous power of national feeling lives in an unreal world. Reality is nationalist.

National feeling is far too deep to be uprooted from people's hearts. It will not take a month, nor a year or two. It is a matter for centuries. Even in Europe, 60 years after European unification has started, look at what is happening in the football stadiums. See what happens when national feeling is hurt—even in Europe. Nationalism is an existing fact, which must be taken into consideration.

Ignoring the irrational element in politics is not a rational behavior. Irrationality exists. It is rational to take the irrational into account. We need to think how, despite this irrationality, we can reach a solution which can be lived with.

... Occupation will not end without peace. We have to see that in the most clear way possible: there is no way of putting an end to all this injustice, of ending the occupation, except in the framework of peace....

That is why it is so important to reach peace quickly. It is possible and realistic. Without achieving peace, the occupation will go on and on and on, and your plan will achieve the exact opposite of what you hope for.

... As I said, I am optimistic. I believe that the Two States Solution will be implemented. I think it is a solution for the foreseeable future.

In any case, I have promised myself to stay alive until it happens.

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