

The Gulf war, Germany, and Israel

Ernst Tugendhat, a professor of philosophy at the Free University of Berlin, comments on the "decay of political culture" behind the current strategic debacle.

Professor Tugendhat was born in 1930 in Brünn, Austria. The following article first appeared in the German review Die Zeit, No. 9, of Feb. 22, 1991, on page 61. The English version we publish here, translated by George Gregory, is printed by the kind permission of the author. Subtitles for the author's sections I and II have been added by EIR's editors.

"How has this decay of political culture occurred?" I asked, "how did we come to this declaration of bankruptcy of intellectuals? I almost feel reminded of 1914. The enthusiasm is not the same, to be sure, but the delusion is the same. Why have you all fallen into step with the official line, albeit with certain nuances?"—"Perhaps," my friend said, "because it is right." "That may be," I responded, "but have you thought this out clearly, or is it merely the complacent comfort in what you imagine to be normality which determines what you do? Imagine the following situation: It is one year later. A woman stands at the window with a small child. She looks outside. It is dark outside, sooty. People should not go outside because of the ultraviolet rays. The woman tells the child how it was before, and what has happened. 'The child asks: And why didn't anyone do anything against it?'"

"This is the question which people ask themselves, the question which drives women and men out onto the streets. It is slandering the so-called peace movement to ask why it did not demonstrate against the invasion of Kuwait or the gassing of the Kurds, or against any other atrocity. First of all, there is no 'peace movement' as such; there are simply many people who are terrified. Secondly: This connection between fear and morality is characteristic of what we call the peace movement, and it is legitimate. Masses do not take to the streets for moral reasons alone, however strong these may be (the decades of catastrophe for the Kurds, for example). It was the same in 1983. Masses demonstrate only when they are *also afraid*. You should not defame our fear. If there is indeed a risk, that the planet be contaminated, then our fear is rational. Or would you claim, that fear for oneself and one's children is egocentric? What if it is! But for most of the demonstrators, this fear flows over into fear for the other

children and people of the city, the country, the world. You cannot separate fear and morality here."

"Maybe you are right," my friend said. "But you have let yourselves be tricked by this fear. The way we should answer the question put by the child is, 'We could not have done anything against it, it was inevitable, and anything else would have been cowardly and immoral.'"—"Really? Will the child accept that answer?"

In the two sections which follow, I want to try to show my friend and his friends, that they are the ones who have been tricked. First, I will examine the arguments in favor of this war, as they were presented to us before war broke out on Jan. 16, and which purportedly still hold today. Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait, and he was to be forced to withdraw from Kuwait. Shortly after the war began, yet another reason was advanced for the war, one which had even more weight for many people: Iraq's enormous stockpile of weapons, including non-conventional weapons, made Iraq appear to be an awesome threat, particularly for Israel, when taken in the context of Saddam's threats manifesting such contempt for human life. Therefore, so goes the argument, the war is also necessary as a preventive war.

That this second reason is uppermost in Germany, is understandable. I will deal with this aspect in the second section. In this first section, I leave Israel out. That might appear somewhat artificial, but one should not advance the first argument, only to switch to the other once the first has been refuted, as my friend does. That does not promote clear thinking.

I. What justifies war?

The official argument for this war is: One country may not invade another. If it does so, the invader must be compelled to withdraw, if need be, compelled by war.

That is a good principle. But if it is supposed to be a principle, it would have to be applied generally, because otherwise it breeds the suspicion, that it is a mere pretext. Why just in the case of Kuwait, or why just now? Consider the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the invasion by the U.S.A. of Panama.

One might answer: Against a superpower, it does not work. So, we already have to water down the principle somewhat: The principle shall be valid only when a small country is invaded by a medium-sized country. The United States is still free to wage war against Panama or Nicaragua or others, particularly Latin American countries, and no one will stop them, because no one can. One might say: Even a principle limited in this way is better than nothing. But to date, the principle has never been applied even in that limited sense. Consider the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Iraq's invasion of Iran, the Turks in Cyprus, Indonesia in East Timor, and so on.

One could object: You have to start somewhere. That, however, justifies the question: Why exactly here and now? Might the answer not be: here, because of the oil; now, because West-East bipolarity has fallen away? Following the end of the Cold War, the United States has scarcely cut back its vast weapons store. Thus the United States needs new pretexts for this policy. The excitement in America about the efficiency of the new weapons confirms this. There is no doubt, that this suits both the interests of the American military-industrial complex and the interests of the U.S.A. In his State of the Union address, Bush stated, that he is striving for a new world order in which the U.S. would have to be number one.

One could object: The case for a war is usually overstated. The interests of the oil industry, the armaments industry, and the hegemony of the U.S. in this case, simply accord with the moral principle. But that line of thought is not quite fair. What actually causes a war is the reason without which the war could not have occurred. It is true, of course, that one cannot lead a people (or a part of the world) into war, if one does not state a "moral" reason for it. A war which serves no "good" purpose, however defined, cannot be waged. But one has to distinguish between pretended and real reasons.

But let us assume, that this is all wrong, that "the" reason for this war were indeed the cited principle of international law. In that case, however, two more fundamental principles of a "just," i.e., justified war, would be violated.

1) Even a war which is justified on its own terms, is justified only if all non-belligerent means to redress the wrong have been exhausted. 2) The evil caused by the war itself, must not be foreseeably out of proportion to the evil one purports to redress. In this case, each of these principles has been clearly violated. Furthermore, the violation of but one of these principles would be sufficient to make the war an unjust war.

Do not ask me how these principles themselves are to be justified. Whoever has any doubts should ask himself how he would decide in a conflict between individuals.

Thus, this war was not only avoidable, it violates international law, it ought never have been begun, and must be stopped right now. It was unavoidable only insofar as the Americans, in anticipation of the war, assembled a military

force that they could neither easily withdraw, nor allow to wait. They were not willing to build a bridge to Saddam Hussein to avoid humiliating him before his own people and the other Arab nations, although Saddam Hussein had received assurances from the American ambassador before invading Kuwait.

This is how the situation is commonly seen in many parts of the Arab world, and the Western world should not imagine that it can frivolously ignore that. But that makes the question problematic, of just who the justified avenger is. For the moment, the war is indeed sanctioned by the United Nations, but it is being waged by the U.S. with some of its Western allies. Why is the problem of Kuwait not being left to the Arab world to sort out?

The fact that many Middle East countries have lined up behind the American alliance (instead of the other way around), is not a valid counter-argument. The rulers in these Middle Eastern countries—who, had they more weapons, could easily take Saddam's place—are fighting for their own survival, not for the interests of their people. The reality shows through in the tragic example of Jordan, but I have neither the time nor space to go into that here.

It is important to see, that this war is growing into a war between the compulsive, sterile industrial world, which calls itself "the West," and the lively, industrially underdeveloped, oil-rich, and humiliated world of Islam, which has a great humanist tradition and as much potential for enlightenment as the West. It is important to see the extent to which racist overtones blend with the light-headedness with which this war is being waged by the West.

Remember that it was in Europe that the most horrible wars—the most contemptuous of human life, the most criminal—were waged. But the potential of a European or an American for arrogance is evidently inexhaustible. Neither Vietnam nor Auschwitz have led us to learn anything, they have only led to memorial monuments.

One indication of this frame of mind is the attitude of the Americans towards casualties in this war. The war is being waged solely according to the principle: Our own losses must be kept as low as possible. The thousands, perhaps soon hundreds of thousands who are not Americans (the American troops are in any case mostly non-whites), do not count. Some people are not the same as other people. "There are domestic policy reasons for that," comes the reply. To be sure, but it is relevant to the suffering which the Americans have brought upon Latin America, Vietnam, and so forth, and which they will now bring upon the world.

This attitude is deeply rooted in the American self-conception, and has a devastating effect to the extent that the Americans have cast aside their former isolationism, and now set out to create a new world order. The United States has a grand domestic political tradition, perhaps the least bad in all of the modern world. We have much to learn here. But the idea of a democratic state under law was, from the outset,

applied almost exclusively to domestic political life. Towards the outside world, what prevailed was the Wild West, self-interest, not human rights.

The American Declaration of Independence contains the profound sentence, "all men are created equal," but in the practice of foreign policy the principle was "some men are more equal than others." It is naive to assume, that a democratic state is incapable of committing atrocities in its foreign policy. The Americans are as badly prepared for their self-ordained role as world policemen as they could possibly be.

To conclude this section, one word concerning Max Weber's appropriate distinction between an ethic of disposition and an ethic of responsibility. The difference between these two ethics is as follows: The first upholds certain principles, no matter what the consequences ("a promise must be kept," "a criminal must be punished"); the second, on the other hand, looks to the consequences in ethical judgment. The purported moral argument for the present war, were it the real reason for the war, would be based on a dispositions ethics. "*Fiat justitia, pereat mundus.*"

The principle of proportionality, on the other hand, is based on responsibility ethics: To redress a crime, one may not commit crimes even more abominable. To kill thousands of innocent children (even when they are only Semites) is not a peccadillo. And one ought not run the risk of contaminating the entire world for the sake of maintaining a dispositions-ethical principle.

The other argument for the war, that the war is a necessary, preventive war, is responsibility-ethical in its idea. Now we must examine this idea.

II. The dilemma

The two reasons given us for this war—reparations and prevention—are not as clearly separated as I suggested above. One can say: We are forcing Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, and we are doing it to *simultaneously* prevent Iraq from invading other countries. (The connection exists, but it is naturally not a logical one: Iraq could withdraw from Kuwait and nevertheless invade another country.)

To my knowledge, preventive wars are not recognized in international law, for good reasons. A responsibility-ethics unrestrained by an ethics of disposition, can do great damage. The purpose does *not* sanctify the means.

Here we have to go into detail. The most important of the additional dangers which ensued from Iraqi expansionism concerned Saudi Arabia and Israel. These dangers can certainly not be played down, but they could have been countered with proportionate means, for example by stationing smaller American contingents in both countries. That might not have been politically easy, but it would have been possible.

In Germany nowadays, one often hears the following consideration: "We are in a dilemma. On the one hand we are for Israel, we have a special responsibility toward Israel;

on the other hand, we are for peace; the one precludes the other, but the first is more important, so we must approve of the war."

Now, this special responsibility does in fact exist. Every objective observer would concede that, and I do not say that as a Jew. The Germans attempted to exterminate the Jews, millions died. And now German nerve gas arrives in Iraq. The route may have been indirect; the fact is and remains horrible. If one understands the word correctly, we have to speak here of a "collective guilt." By that I mean (and do not

Universalist-thinking Jews say to the Israelis: "We feel with you. But we do not look to your short-term desires, but rather to your long-term interests. These can only be achieved if you finally take account of the interests and fears of the others living in Palestine."

twist the words around in my mouth!): Whoever belongs to a collective which has done something bad, even if he belongs to a later generation, must explicitly distance himself from it, and act accordingly.

The next question is: What does it mean in this case to "act accordingly"? Only one thing: To have a special sense of responsibility toward another (it is similar between individuals), particularly when the direct effects of one's own culpable behavior are at issue. So it is only right when people in Germany say "We are for Israel, we have to be." But the question is: What does it mean to be for Israel?

The question is similar when one asks oneself: What does it mean for an individual to be for someone to whom he has caused harm, humiliated, persecuted? There are two extreme cases (and numerous mixed cases): If the guilt which one feels is not worked through consciously, it is not rational and controlled. Consequently, one behaves toward this other, doing everything the other believes one ought to do. Thus, one gives up one's own independent judgment, leaving the other the opportunity to manipulate one's guilt. There are people and also nations who play upon the irrational guilt feelings of others with the virtuosity of a concert pianist. That is what the Israelis do with the Germans.

The alternative is to understand one's guilt rationally. "I am concerned about him" then no longer means, that I subject myself to what may be another's irrational wishes; instead I keep my independent capacity for judgment, and ask: How can I help the other, what are his true interests? (By so doing,

of course, I take away nothing of his own independence.)

On this issue, the Jews themselves are split. The Zionist majority, especially the Israelis, are of the view that this war is a stroke of luck for them, because it will prevent Saddam from possibly invading them at a later date. That is naturally connected to their desire to change nothing in their own *status quo*, especially as concerns the neighboring states, and most particularly with respect to the Palestinians enslaved by the Israelis. That is why they reject any Middle East conference.

The others, for the most part non-Zionist Jews, argue

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thus: 1) A cease-fire must be concluded immediately, because every day that the war continues may lead to a poison-gas attack on Israel.

2) To the objection, that the Iraqis might later invade Israel, they reply: Firstly, the Israelis are the ones who already have nuclear weapons in the region, but above all, this fixation on Iraq is shortsighted. The hatred against Israel issues from Palestine and from there has spread throughout the Islamic world. If Saddam is overthrown now, and the armaments of other Middle East nations are built up by the West, as Iraq's was previously, the war against Israel will be waged later by another country.

3) The hatred of the Muslims against Israel is not without cause. The Zionists stole a part of their land from them, and since the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, the relationship of official Israel to the Arabs in their country and in the countries Israel has illegally occupied, has become ever more inhuman. Now and then, there were approaches by the Palestinians, there was a prospect for the recognition of the existence of the state of Israel, but the intransigent behavior of Israel cast the Palestinians and the Muslims back into such a desperate situation, that they again place their only hopes in a war. Saddam exploits that. It seems out of the question, that the situation in the Middle East will ever be stabilized if Israel does not learn to fundamentally change.

That is not only my personal view. In Berlin and in Zurich, there is a so-called "Jewish group," which formed after the invasion of Lebanon, people who call themselves (somewhat presumptuously, perhaps) "critical Jews." Some of the members of this group issued a declaration two weeks after the war broke out, the kernel of which was: "If the U.S.A. together with its allies ultimately win this war, the Islamic world will endeavor over the long term to destroy Israel with nuclear weapons. Only an immediate cease-fire can avert more misery. Israel can achieve lasting tranquility and security only if the Palestinians are granted the right to self-determination while recognizing the Jewish state."

So, the issue is also discussed with much controversy among Jews. Before we ask what that means for the Germans, I would like to insert a brief historical retrospect, because people in Germany know so little about us. On the basis of their religion, Jews always had the tendency to react to their fate ethically, but there were two extreme alternatives. The one says: "We know what it means to be a persecuted minority. That should not happen anywhere ever again. The most important thing is, that each person is a human being, a child of God, and not whether he is Jew, Christian, Mohammedan, German or Polish." The others say: "We want to be one people like all others. We also want to be politically a nation. And our highest guiding goal should not be the rights of human beings, but the survival and well-being of our people."

The first of these Jewish ways—both naturally feed off sources of Jewish religion—I want to call the universalist. To this belong all of the great Jewish humanists such as Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, Martin Buber, and hundreds of other names, hundreds of thousands of the nameless. The other way, the "particularist" (self-preservation of the Jewish people) was promoted chiefly by Zionism, emerging around the turn of the century.

In Europe and America earlier, that Jewry which understood itself as universalist was predominant, even after 1933. The turn came in 1944, in the last year of the war, when the large Jewish organizations in America, which had been anti-Zionist in their majority up to that time, despairingly had to acknowledge, that England and the U.S.A., which were allegedly waging war for the good cause and against the Nazi crimes in Europe, were willing to do nothing, absolutely nothing to save the Jews in Europe—and it would have been possible; not one single aircraft of the Allies from the bombardment of Hamburg or Dresden redirected to hit the railway lines to Auschwitz (compare D.S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews; America and the Holocaust 1941-1945*, Pantheon, 1984). It was shattering for the American Jew: No one is helping us. At this moment the Zionists achieved decisive majorities in American Jewish organizations.

The turn is not only understandable, it was almost inevitable. Less understandable and perhaps less unavoidable was

the progressive radicalization of particularism which followed, initially in Israel and then among the majority of American Jews.

But one should also know, that many Jews before, during, and after the Nazis, said and still say: We are against Zionism, first because this national interpretation without the Messiah contradicts Jewish tradition, and second because the foundation of a state based on an injustice cannot turn out for the good. What is tragic about this last point is that, for the majority of Jews (and Europeans in general), Palestine then appeared to be an empty country. The Arabs who lived there seemed negligible. That was the European mentality at the time. But today we should know better.

Now, these two currents in Judaism are not totally distinct. Particularism does not strictly correspond to Zionism. There are Israelis who have maintained the universalist way of thinking. But they are in the minority, and they are slandered.

Non-Zionist Jews feel themselves in solidarity with Israel. This word, in a way similar to what was said about guilt feelings, is to be understood in two directions. Universalist-thinking Jews say to the Israelis: "We feel with you. But we do not look to your short-term desires, but rather to your long-term interests. These can only be achieved if you finally take account of the interests and fears of the others living in Palestine. And that means, that you have to become conscious of the other part of our Jewish tradition. You live from hand to mouth. You stare only at the most immediate danger, seek to overcome it, create new suffering, and then everything begins all over again. Where is this supposed to end?"

So, I think: Viewed over the long term (and that is what one must do, finally), what is best for the rest of the Middle East is also best for Israel, and vice versa. Is that seeing the matter too idealistically? It is a simple fact: Whenever many have to live together, be it persons or collectives, they can do that over the long term only if they lay their cudgels to one side, and attempt to reach agreement, taking mutual account of their interests. That is difficult, but there is no alternative.

After this excursion on the intra-Jewish conflicts (it is actually the kernel of my argument), I return to the relationship of the Germans to Israel. I am often told: "Of course that is all true. But you can only say that as a Jew. If we said it, we would be shoved into the ultraright-wing corner, and those kinds of people deny that we have a special responsibility toward Israel." I am horrified. Do you want to say, I ask back, that you therefore believe you have to say something which you think is wrong? Is there then no objectivity? Everything becomes worse when the issue is no longer points of view, but opinions which determine Germany's actions.

Is it true that one must see everything in perspective? The problem poses itself once more among individuals as it does between collectives. Is it necessarily so, that the way I judge

myself has to be different from the way others judge me?

This total relativism, so popular in modern French philosophy and so beloved among the present young generation, is, of course, nonsense. If it were true, one person could never ask another person for advice. On the other hand, it is correct: If one person commits an injustice against another person, he must know, that he has to be *cautious* giving advice in the future. It is then often best if he gives none at all. On the other hand, the second person cannot demand of the first, that he should now do everything which he, the second, wants. In any case—and this seems to be most important—the first person must be circumspect in tone and form, simply insofar as it must become clear, that he does not ignore his guilt.

In the matter itself, he must, if he intervenes at all, seek to be as implacably objective as he can possibly be, contrary to everything, even his own short-term interests. No final judgment can ever be made of the situation of an individual or a collective, but one is lost in that moment when one lets his judgment be diverted (consciously or unconsciously) by extraneous motives. At that point, one gives up even the claim to act according to his best knowledge.

I therefore concede, that it is easier for me, as a Jew, to see certain things, but either my views are wrong, or a non-Jewish German would have to be able to see these things in the same way. Now, in the above, I have distinguished the rational and irrational working out of guilt toward the Jews. From what has been said, it follows, that if this guilt had been rationally worked up, the special responsibility which Germans have toward Israel on account of their *guilt*, must coincide with the special responsibility which the universalist-thinking Jew has toward Israel on the basis of his shared community. On the other hand, it is also true, that the irrational wishes of the Israelis (the implementation of their short term interests) enters a disastrous alliance with the irrational wishes of the Germans (forgiveness of their guilt).

The question remains of why the Germans have worked up the guilt for the Holocaust so irrationally. It is this irrationality which makes them disposed to go to their knees when the Israelis point their finger at them. This buckling under seems to be a more general phenomenon—it is particularly strong among Germans in their behavior toward Americans as well. Both are connected with World War II and its end. The key word vis-à-vis the Americans is "solidarity." To be sure, one has good reasons to act in solidarity with the Americans, but here the question poses itself once more of whether there are not two different sorts of solidarity, one which is rational and adult, and an irrational one, an infantile one. The latter can be disastrous in political life as well as in interpersonal relations.

I am not a social psychologist, and I do not understand much about these mechanisms. If one looks at the other West European countries as well, then evidently there is some

Israeli lawyer in Berlin: 'We must forge peace'

For years Felicia Langer, the Israeli attorney who has defended thousands of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, has thought of herself as "a lone voice in the wilderness." For her efforts to protect the human rights of the Palestinians, she won the Alternative Nobel Prize in 1990 and the Kreisky Prize in 1991. "With sorrow and indignation," she reports, she had to close her law office after a 23-year struggle, and leave Israel, because she was able to successfully defend only 2 or 3% of her clients. Now she travels from country to country reporting on the Palestinians' plight and appealing for peace in the Persian Gulf.

"The policy of the Israeli government is an example of the flouting of international law," she said on Feb. 18 in a speech at the Berlin Technical University in front of thousands of listeners. She said that she herself is the attorney and witness for a "two-tiered society, a two-faced justice."

"For 23 years the Palestinians have lived under Israeli occupation, the U.N. resolutions have been ignored, and the world has kept silent. For Israel there were no ultimatums and no sanctions." Mrs. Langer quoted Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who said in response to the latest U.N. resolutions against Israeli actions, "This resolution will turn to dust in the archives like so many others." The resolution had condemned the deportations of Palestinian settlements and the massacre on Temple Mount in Jerusalem in October 1990.

Mrs. Langer reported on the actions against the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories which are in violation of international law. "I have seen the torture wounds on the bodies of many of my clients myself." Humiliations, deliberate killings, deportations, destruction of houses

and constant detentions without trials, or trials without proof of guilt—Felicia Langer has documented and made public many of these "measures."

"Israel had believed after 20 years of occupation that they had achieved their goal—the reduction of the Palestinian people to a controlled mass of degraded workers." But the Israeli regime was deluded. No one reckoned with the Intifada, the Palestinian uprising. Now, with the onset of the Gulf war, the Jerusalem government took the opportunity to carry out an "apartheid policy" against the Palestinians, a collective punishment—strict curfews, withdrawal of water, forced closings of all schools, and a general ban on work. "They live as if in a huge prison," Mrs. Langer said, and called for a solution: "Two nations, two states," she said, and demanded the immediate convening of a Middle East conference which would establish the withdrawal of all troops from all occupied territories and thus establish the basis for peace.

Langer considers Saddam Hussein a bloody criminal, but says, "We cannot redress crimes with even bigger crimes. That will never end, neither for us Israelis, for the Americans, or any other people." She expressed fear about her friends in Israel, but also about all the people in the Occupied Territories, and sorrow over all the victims of this bloody war in Iraq.

"What is Mr. Bush's new world order?" she asked, and explained, that a friend of hers from Pakistan, with whom she had recently talked by telephone, reported to her that people in his country already fear that Pakistan could be the next victim of this new world order. "This new world order is the most gruesome neo-colonialism," Felicia Langer stated in Berlin.

Two months ago, Felicia Langer spoke before one of the largest peace demonstrations and said, "Time is blood." Every day of the war has raised the toll in blood. So in Berlin, the courageous lawyer appealed, all the more passionately, "We must not wish for mutual annihilation, but rather to forge common interests."

—Birgit Brenner

other motive for this apparently self-evident about-face to participate in an unjust war. There are goodies to be distributed here, intangible and material, and no one wants to be left out. That again shows how great the power of the United States is.

There might be another reason for buckling under to the Jews. I ask myself: Why is the rational working out of a guilt feeling so difficult? To be sure, the monstrosity of what had happened was without precedent. But there is perhaps something else, which I only want to pose as a hypothesis. Might it not be, that a continuing irrational sense of guilt

and continuing smoldering anti-Semitism mutually keep each other alive? That includes the thesis, that a widespread smoldering anti-Semitism in Germany is still there. I hesitate to say that, because I have made no empirical investigations, and because I have myself experienced nearly no anti-Semitism over the course of my 40-year sojourn in this country.

But I would like to mention an astounding, small observation, which concerns something which is universally prevalent in Germany, but which is so insignificant, that it should not seriously worry anyone. No matter which country one happens to be in, sooner or later one is usually asked whether

one is a Jew. The remarkable thing is, that in Germany, and only in Germany, this question is always posed, "Are you of Jewish descent?"

I always feel a bit offended, and am forced to respond: "I am not only of Jewish descent, but I am a Jew." Someone explained to me recently, that people express themselves this way, because they have no concrete notion of a Jew who is neither religious nor a citizen of Israel. But, firstly: Why then are the Germans the only ones who express themselves that way? And secondly: It is not sufficient if we ourselves have a very concrete idea of what it means, and that for me, for example (and probably for most Jews), being Jewish is my sole *indubitable* identity?

I therefore inevitably begin to suspect another explanation. It could be a certain polite caution which suggests this long-winded formulation to the Germans. That would mean, that the German thinks he might offend someone if he asks him straightforwardly whether he is a Jew.

But why? I can only imagine, that the questioner thinks being a Jew is something disreputable, something flawed. But we Jews are so proud and conceited to be Jews; we have so much difficulty getting this business of being the "chosen people" out of our system, although that is as nonsensical as your finding it disreputable. But if almost all of you speak that way ("Are you of Jewish descent?"), might one not demonstrate with this harmless example that you think that Jews have a flaw?

Assuming furthermore (all of this a bit hypothetical), that that is only one symptom, is it not then quite understandable, that you cannot get the irrational out of your system, because it is probably so difficult to get rid of certain apparently harmless prejudices from the Nazi period and earlier, just as difficult as it is for us to free ourselves from the prejudice which bears down upon us from the beginning, this prejudice of being the chosen people? Is this Jewish prejudice not profoundly inhuman, and is this not the basis for Israel's attitude toward its Islamic environment? Do we Jews not have to say, that this is a part of our guilt, and that our arrogance and your anti-Semitism go hand in hand?

It is probably possible for us, Germans and Jews, to recognize the basic facts most easily in such an insignificant example, because everything which is too significant easily leads to irrational outbursts. Such insignificant points might perhaps form the beginning to mutually recognize each other not only blindly, but to understand each other, without latent disparagement, without glossing anything over.

"And now you want to claim, that this is the reason why we want to go to war for Israel?" *One* reason. There is *no* objective comprehensible moral reason for this war. Perhaps unconsciously many people are a little bellicose, and so they find themselves in the same boat with the Americans, English, and French, some somewhat more explicitly, some more suppressed. The main point is, that war has become presentable once again in Germany.



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