

(a cura di)
Pasquale Pasquino e Pamela Harris

IL FUTURO DI ISRAELE / THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL



FONDAZIONE ADRIANO OLIVETTI

Fondazione Adriano Olivetti

IL FUTURO DI ISRAELE

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FONDAZIONE ADRIANO OLIVETTI

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Pasquale Pasquino

PREFACE

This volume reproduces the transcript of the debate held on 13-14 January 2005 at the Fondazione Adriano Olivetti, on a topic that is particularly important to all of us: the future of the State of Israel.

This project was born out of a meeting in New York between myself and Edna and Avishai Margalit, both professors of philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and both active and exemplary citizens of a state born out of the tragic circumstances of World War II, on the heels of the persecution of the Jewish people and their expulsion from Europe. The tragedy of the Palestinians, which is set against that of the Jews, has created an endemic conflict in the lands of Palestine, which the second *intifada* has violently brought to the attention of international public opinion. Recent events, from the death of Yasir Arafat to the difficult decision of Ariel Sharon's government to order the withdrawal of Jewish colonies from the Gaza Strip, have let in faint glimmers of hope for peace and reconciliation among those peoples whom fate and history oblige to share the same narrow tongue of land squeezed between the desert and the sea – a land laden with memories, passions, devotions and torments.

This debate, which was made possible by the kind and generous collaboration with the Italian Jewish Community and the friendship of its president Amos Luzzatto, took a unique form. It seemed to us that it would be inopportune to put ourselves in the position of observers and judges of the present conflict between Jews and Palestinians. Europeans' heavy responsibility for the "expulsion" of the Jews permanently disqualifies us from being impartial judges. It seemed instead opportune to provide Israeli and Italian Jews a space for a dialogue "between themselves." The extraordinary pluralism of the Jewish and Israeli civil and political culture – to which this volume is a vivid testimony – by itself guaranteed respect for the principle of every civil debate: *audiatur et altera pars*.

The reader will judge the wealth and vivacity of the encounter for his- or herself. With this publication, the president of the foundation, Laura Olivetti, and I would like to express our friendship with the Jews and honor the memory of the persecutions which, under Fascism, victimized the Olivetti family, and Adriano in particular.

Pasquale Pasquino

PREFAZIONE

Questo Quaderno riproduce la trascrizione del dibattito organizzato il 13 e 14 gennaio 2005 presso la Fondazione Adriano Olivetti su un tema, per noi, particolarmente importante e di grande attualità per tutti : Il futuro dello stato di Israele.

Il progetto era nato dall'incontro a New York di chi scrive con Edna e Avishai Margalit, entrambi professori di filosofia alla Hebrew University di Jerusalem, ed entrambi cittadini attivi ed esemplari di uno stato nato nelle tragiche circostanze del dopoguerra, a ridosso della persecuzione e della cacciata dall' Europa del popolo ebraico. La tragedia dei palestinesi, che si è addossata a quella degli ebrei, ha creato nelle terre di Palestina un conflitto endemico, che la seconda *intifada* ha posto con violenza inaudita dinanzi agli occhi dell'opinione pubblica internazionale. Le vicende recenti, dalla morte di Yasir Arafat alla difficile decisione del governo di Ariel Sharon di ritirare, di forzare al ritiro, i coloni ebrei che vivono nella striscia di Gaza, aprono sottili spiragli alla speranza di pace e di riconciliazione fra coloro che il destino e la storia obbligano a condividere la stessa sottile lingua di terra, stretta fra il deserto ed il mare – una terra carica di ricordi, di passioni, di devozioni e di tormenti.

L'incontro che è stato reso possibile dalla gentile e generosa collaborazione della Comunità ebraica italiana e dall'amicizia del suo presidente, Amos Luzzatto, ha preso una forma particolare. Ci è parso che non fosse opportuno porci in una posizione di osservatori e di giudici nei confronti del conflitto odierno fra ebrei e palestinesi. Le pesantissime responsabilità degli europei nei confronti della “cacciata” degli ebrei ci scanzano per sempre da una posizione di giudici imparziali e terzi. Ci è sembrato invece opportuno offrire agli ebrei israeliani ed italiani un luogo di incontro per un dialogo “fra di loro”. Lo straordinario pluralismo della cultura civile e politica ebraica ed israeliana – di cui questo *Quaderno* è una vivida e lucida testimonianza – garantiva da solo l'assolvimento dell'obbligo principe di ogni dibattito civile: *audiatur et altera pars*.

Il lettore giudicherà da solo la ricchezza e la vivacità del confronto. Con questa pubblicazione l'autore di queste righe e la presidente Laura Olivetti vogliono testimoniare la loro amicizia nei confronti di tutti gli ebrei ed onorare il ricordo delle persecuzioni di cui fu vittima, sotto il fascismo, la famiglia Olivetti, e Adriano, in particolare.

The Future of Israel

Fondazione Adriano Olivetti - Gennaio 2005

Thursday, 13 January 2005

AMOS LUZZATTO:

The process known as the *Emancipation of the Jews* in Europe, certainly fruit of the Enlightenment, solved the problem of the Jew as citizen, freed from the boundaries of the Ghetto. However, it also made a strong contribution to the dissolution of the community's microcosm, a place where - despite the problems - an autonomous Jewish culture was preserved and developed.

At that point, the problem of the future of the *Jewish group* burst onto the scene. At most, that group could be accepted as a religious minority, whereby "religious" we mean a model resembling Christian group(s), but with some distinctive characteristics. Whatever the original redefinition used for religious services, rules and the education of new generations, it was inevitably called "religious". So, a *reform* Judaism could be born, but not an "other" Judaism defined as something other than a religion, with its ministers, organization and rites.

Actually, there was no need to invent this "other" Judaism. It already had not one but two languages (originally borrowed from German and Spanish, but adapted during the migrations through European and Mediterranean lands), its own musical tradition, a civil and penal law, set forth in the numerous tractates of the *Mishna* and amply discussed in the *Gemara*. This law could only be partially applied since the Jews were - out of principle - subject to the laws of the local rulers, but it was jealously preserved, studied and passed down. It was the Jews' way of telling themselves that in Judaism, everything concerning the law governing man's relationship with God (in Hebrew, *ben adam la-makom*) has a dignity, but everything regarding people's relations with each other (*ben adam la-chavero*) is equally important.

Translated into European terminology, it was like saying that, along with the traditional culture, there was also a secular tradition in Judaism. It was often said that the two traditions were indissolubly intertwined, secularizing religion into something like secular culture. But that is untrue. A tractate like the *Baba Metzia* is only secular, while the *Berachot* is strictly religious. Both are found in Judaism, without confusion and without overlapping. But Judaism also failed to find an autonomous space for itself in the Europe of nations and nationalism, for a human group like the Jews was dispersed and separated by political borders.

First Zionism and then the birth of the state of Israel gave shape and life to this space that was missing before. When Theodor Herzl proclaimed, with both prophetic fervor and a certain approximation, *Wir sind ein Volk*, he was expressing a specific need.

I thus believe that we can give a positive answer to the question of whether there is a future for a Jewish identity in Europe, though many see this future as threatened by a

marked secularization. It is indeed possible to think of a Judaism, and of a Jewish identity, *independently* of (though not necessarily in *contrast* to) “religion”. To deny this possibility would be to negate of the very state of Israel.

A first assertion, derived from what I said earlier, is that the future of Israel “concerns” us Jews of the Diaspora, out of a general sense of solidarity that often includes family ties. This future can (depending on the road taken) either mean a new consolidation and perhaps even an expansion of the Jewish life in our communities - from Paris and Berlin to Rome and Brussels - or a serious crisis.

So what is the future?

I could try to find a formula that satisfies everyone: a formula of peace and security. But that I will not do, not because I deny that need, but because formulating it, without taking into account the obstacles that exist, is useless. The obstacles are not only *local*, lying in the small piece of land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. The obstacles are global. I believe that the sentence, “the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a danger for the stability of the Middle East,” is untrue. The truth is that the general tensions in the Middle East have always had a casual influence on Israeli-Palestinian relationships. Our world has always seen a confrontation of countries and peoples, unequal in economic development and with entirely different social structures. But in a certain sense, as in the times of classic colonialism, they lived far apart. It is not that way anymore. We know that the world has become much smaller, the economy is becoming global and not everything in backward countries can really be called backward: at least in terms of quality, economic and military techniques are not backwards, nor are the ways of life of the privileged classes, which are also the leading political classes. But we also know that the gap between the two worlds is widening. The poor, who once managed to survive at modest levels, are threatened by the rich world’s technology for the transformation of raw material and the very nature of the environment.

The result is a dangerous tension, which cannot be eased by “teaching” parliamentary democracy, which is typical of a mature industrial society but very far from an impoverished one, or by building it on that thin “Westernized” layer of society that is in fact disliked by most of the population.

In this framework, Israel is a state with the structure and culture of a modern industrial state, literally brushing against a prevalently agrarian-artisan society that lacks technological know-how. The leadership group of this society is worried about the possible cooperation between two independent states, out of fear of being dominated by the stronger country.

One attempt to stop and delay closer contact between the two cultures comes from terrorism. But it comes even more from religious fundamentalism which, for example, declares the whole land *dar-al Islam*, and calls for a mass mobilization with the careful use of a mixture of demagogy, “religious” extremism, racism and anti-Jewish hate. They partly welcome but partly just tolerate the generous and brilliant Israeli initiative, with the cooperation of some regions of Italy, to provide free medical care for pediatric illnesses in Palestinian towns. Even that initiative is criticized by many because “nothing should be accepted from the Jews”.

This is not an invitation to suspend the initiative, which I appreciate immensely and to which I have invited a number of personal friends to join. I would only like to state

that the problems lie in the beginning; they are historical and structural and - in addition – they depend only partly on Israel.

There are two debates underway in Israel today. The first: should security be obtained by making peace, or should peace be obtained through security. In my opinion, this is an artificial debate, as if peace and security could be divided from one another.

The second debate concerns how to ensure both a Jewish and democratic future and character for the state of Israel. The main response - though hotly contested by a minority - is apparently that this goal can only be reached with *two* states, Israel and Palestine, next to each other, living in peace and cooperation. This is a very concrete debate. I believe that the present new government in Israel intends to work in this direction.

As for me, I would humbly like to add another idea, one involving culture.

We might consider drawing up a preliminary initial agreement to the peace treaty: a commitment by the Israeli Ministry of Education and the Palestinian equivalent to make the study of their respective languages, Arabic for the Israelis and Hebrew for the Palestinians, compulsory. It doesn't make sense that two peoples, who speak very similar languages, should have to speak to each other in English, a language that neither of them know very well.

That could open a door, and once the door is open, the path is clear to the study of the history, thought and literature of the two cultures.

But that is not enough. There is much more to culture. We know that when in *Al-Andalus*, Arab culture flourished in every field of knowledge, Jews of the Iberian Peninsula learned from their “cousins” to read Aristotle, to write poetry according to certain metrics and rhyme, and to study mathematics and astronomy and even medicine.

Times have changed. Science and philosophy, not to mention medicine, are no longer the same. Nor are the academies the same. Today, Israel can offer the Palestinians the scientific, technological culture that they must otherwise import from abroad with great difficulty. Israel can give back to Arabs what Jews received in Spain, which later expelled them both in the same year. Both Arabs and Jews suffered, but Spain suffered too, a great deal indeed.

Allow me to conclude by quoting some particularly significant lines by the 19th century Jewish poet, Heinrich Heine, where he evoked the heart-rending departure from Granada of the last “King of the Moors”:

“Not the triumphant,
crowned with victory,
the favourite of the blind goddess,
but also the bloodied son of misfortune
even the heroic fighter
subjected to an adverse destiny
will live forever
in the memory of men”.

GIORGIO GOMEL:

If and when Israel can be secured a future of peace, normalcy and integration in the Middle East, the rift, the cleavage between the Diaspora and Israel will widen. That does not mean that there will not continue to be cultural or spiritual attachment, and family ties and intimacy, that we will not be traveling to Israel and you will not be visiting Diaspora Jews. I mean that the peculiar thing that has been very prominent since the birth of the state of Israel, the very strong link between the Diaspora and Israel, will be weakened in the future. But I would contend that there is nothing to worry about. But it is a very important change. I found this point very well argued in a book that I read about 10 years ago by an Israeli political thinker (David Vital, *The Future of the Jews*). This remains a heterodox and somewhat controversial argument in the Diaspora. But I think it should be one of the issues for our discussion; although the focus is certainly the future of Israel, still, this aspect of Israel - Diaspora relations is an important one.

SERGIO MINERBI:

I want first of all to thank Professor Luzzatto for saying things that I am generally in agreement with. But, with all due respect, I am even more grateful to Mr. Gomel, because it gives me the opportunity of saying exactly the contrary of what he said, by and large.

First of all, as far as you spoke about Spain, Jews and Arabs together, we now have to give back and so on, much more is done in this area than is known. As a matter of fact, whoever uses an Intel chip which is called the MMX for mathematical operations knows, or perhaps does not know, that the Intel chip was made at the Intel design center in Haifa by a group of people, led by an Arab from Nazareth. So the circle is closing. There are, perhaps not enough, but there are Arabs involved in the scientific development in Israel, and I do hope that this will only increase. You gave the example of the children treated by medical people, but there are many other examples – like one which has nothing to do with scientific operations, but I must mention it, because it is important - we have seen Arabs giving organs to Jewish people, and the other way around as well. And this is really a very deep proof of solidarity.

Now if the situation is so good, why is it so bad? I will immediately jump to this. I would only just remind you that in Salerno – which I consider to be the first university, not Bologna - in Salerno, in the 9th century, there was a medical school with Arab and Jewish professors. And so we have a long history of cooperation. The problem today is not so much how to cooperate with Palestinians, or how to cooperate with Arabs at large, but how to deal with religious, Islamic fundamentalists. This is the real problem, not only for us. Because the Islamic fundamentalists are attacking the Moslem states first of all. Before the West, before Israel. They are attacking in Egypt, in Saudi Arabia, in Turkey. They are attacking first of all in Moslem states, because this is their constituency. This is where they want to win. More than to create an upheaval in the West, which they will not be able to do anyway, I hope. But very little is related in the Italian press about the Moslem against Moslem problem and situation. Because, as the Pope has said several

times—you will excuse me for quoting the Pope, it's just like *Cartago delenda est*, I am going back if necessary or not—the Pope was saying that all the terrorism in the world will eventually come to a solution if and when the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be solved. I would sign this. I would be happy if this were true, but unfortunately, this is not true. And so, this is a view that should be revised.

Now, listening to Dr. Gomel, I had the impression that he is very deeply impressed by the European spirit of Mr. Chirac. He spoke of the persistence of the Jews in Europe, the conditions for the resumption of the peace process, and so on, and the two-state solution, which is considered to be the only one. Yes, there can be the two-state solution. It can be a federation between Arab Palestine and Jordan. There are many, many solutions possible. But, he immediately says, “but it is very difficult because of those settlers.” So all of the other problems have been solved, we have no problem whatsoever with the Kassam missiles falling on the road. We have no problem whatsoever with explosives exploding every second day. So, the only problem is the settlers. So I didn't vote for them, and I have no great sympathy with the settlers, but it seems to me to exaggerate the situation to attribute all the blame for the stalling of the peace process to them. And insofar as you are wed to this point, you will be wrong. Sorry. In the last campaign for the Presidential elections in Palestine, Mr. Mustafa Barghouti – who got 20%, a respectable slice of the vote – spoke about a small detail of little importance, 6.5 billion dollars which are unaccounted for and which were received by the Palestinian Authority, and nobody knows exactly where they are. How did he calculate, how did he jump to the conclusion that there are \$6.5 billion? I don't know. We used to hear that Mr. Arafat had a small private account of \$2 billion, now we hear about 6.5 billion dollars missing, which means that there are other small accounts of this type around. I don't know, but one thing is for sure, there was no transparency in the Palestinian administration. And whatever Abu Mazen wanted, when he was Prime Minister after Aqaba, unfortunately he did not succeed because Arafat blocked him. Now that Arafat is not there to block, what happens now, where is transparency now? Naturally one cannot do in two days what was not done for twenty years, that's for sure. But anyway, this is problem number one. Where is the money going? Because whenever in the Italian “lacrimous” newspapers we hear about the desperate situation of the Palestinians under the occupation, the first desperate situation is that the Palestinians did not get what the international community meant to send to them. They did not receive a penny out of this. And naturally, when this is the situation, Europe is continuing to give money. Everybody is continuing to give money. And this money does not reach its final destination.

Now, about the relations between the Diaspora and Israel. I think again that this view of Mr. Gomel is a European view. If you had an American approach, then you would know that today the situation is the inverse. It is not so much that Israel is asking for the support of the Americans as the Americans are asking for the support of Israel. I give you an example. In the allocation of the funds of the United Jewish Appeal, an increasing majority is going out of the United Appeal back to American institutions, American Jewish schools, American Jewish institutions. This means that, in order to save the American Jewish institutions, you need the name of Israel. Otherwise, you are not able to raise enough money. This is the situation as of today. Not to mention – this is not my invention, the figures are there—the situation which is existing inside the American

community because of mixed marriage, and the fact that at least 50% are mixed marriages, and this has consequences on Jewish education. Now there is a growing divergence. I am not sure whether this divergence has always existed – wherever there are two Jews there are three ideas, so it's a must – but I don't know whether it is growing or not growing. What I do know is that if the Diaspora would like to cut itself off from links with Israel, the first to suffer would be the Diaspora. And this is quite simple. I also think, here I am coming to your point, that the luxury of being a Jew, with a deep Jewish identity, and being secular at the same time, is possible for Israeli Jews, but is very difficult for Diaspora Jews. It is not impossible, but it is very difficult. And this also has consequences for Jewish education and so on and so forth.

Now the beautiful, wonderful idea of Israel as a state of all its citizens. This is a beautiful formula, who would not agree? But this is just a joke. This is the formula that was invented by Azmi Bishara, saying, we don't need a second Palestinian state, we already have our Palestinian state *in pectore*, and it is here, and all we have to do is continue making children, as we are doing now. And since Israel is democratic, the day will come when we will have a fine majority inside Israel, so the hell with the Palestinian state. Instead of cutting it in two pieces, give us all the cake. So I am just smiling when I hear this formula, especially by a Jew in the Diaspora. I mean, it's laughable.

Now, the Diaspora problems are of such a magnitude, especially because of mixed marriage, that I am not sure that we can cope with them here in a few hours, and so I would prefer to leave them out. We already have *du pain sur la planche* with the problems of the small Israel, not to mention all the problems of all the Jewish people in the world. I just think that instead of trying to make the divergence even deeper than it has been until now, instead of good-thinking Italian Jews signing wonderful manifestos against the state of Israel - including one which has unfortunately the surname of Minerbi - it could be much better either to keep silent and see what happens, which is always an interesting position, or to take a position in favor of the only Jewish state which exists in the world today. Thank you very much.

AMOS ELON:

Let me say, first of all, that I share and value your view, Professor. On secular identity. Let me add that I would like to apply the same principle to Israel as well. We have not been so successful about this so far. And I share your opinion too that what happens in Israel will have an impact on your identity as a Jew and as a secularist. Therefore, whatever you wish to do here, depends on what Israel does. It depends on what kind of society Israel is, whether there is peace or whether there is war, whether there is half a peace or limited warfare, and so forth. Whether Israel is democracy or a repressive society. Whether Israel is a mighty cultural state or a theocracy. All of this will have an impact, not just on Israelis, but on Jews too, wherever they live. And for this reason, I think it is important to try to weigh where we are now on these basic problems that I just mentioned. Pasquale mentioned at the beginning in a few words about this new opening that you now have following the death of Yasir Arafat, the election of Abu Mazen as president of the Palestinians and the new coalition in Israel between the decimated Sharon and the Labor party. All of this is, of course, a window of opportunity, as they say. But I would warn you not to get as euphoric about this as the press recently has, both in Europe and in America. There's a lot of wishful thinking in this. Of course,

everybody wishes that this will finally be the window of opportunity for which we have been waiting for 50 years, and on which so much depends for your identity and your future as secular Jews in Europe.

So, let me try to sum this up somehow if I can. I think that to be euphoric about this alleged breakthrough is highly premature. And the reason for thinking so is that you are dealing here, unfortunately, with two weak regimes. Sharon, as you know, has gained Mr. Peres, but he has lost large parts of his own party. Abu Mazen, on the other hand, has not won an overwhelming majority. Less than 50% of Palestinians participated in this election. 30% of them are said to be Hamas, who boycotted this election deliberately. So he is just as weak and as questionable in his possibilities as Sharon is. Now, at the same time, it is true that Abu Mazen has a mandate, at least he has a mandate. The question is whether he will exercise it. And the even bigger question is whether the Israelis will give him a chance, since the Israelis are the stronger party. This is not the first time that Mr. Abu Mazen comes to power. I might remind you that he was appointed Palestinian prime minister in 2003, and this collapsed very quickly, largely because of Israeli intransigence. I am not saying that this will happen again, but you must bear this in mind. Sharon's attitude is still quite obscure. He hasn't spelled it out personally. But his basic attitude is well known. Sharon does not believe in a peace settlement with Palestinians. Sharon pays lip service to the idea of two states, something that was anathema for him only three or four—only two—years ago. He does not favor the establishment of a Palestinian state, certainly not now. From all we know of his opinions, he is in favor of a very long interim agreement, a long armistice between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Some speak of 30 years, some of his advisors have spoken of 40 years. The most shocking revelation came from the mouth of his closest political advisor, Mr. Weissglas, who happens to also be his lawyer. He said openly in an interview that the evacuation of Gaza is being done not out of principle, but simply because it's too expensive, and it's too difficult, and too costly in human lives; the evacuation of Gaza would actually guarantee the retention of large parts of the West Bank and of most settlements there, as a result. He said that about six weeks ago in a famous interview, that was denied neither by Mr. Weissglas nor by Mr. Sharon. He also used the famous expression, that "the Palestinians will have a state when they will be like Finns." And so, the question is, if this is his attitude, can the Palestinians live with it? Well, I don't think they can. I wish they would, certainly. But to be candid, I think there is very little likelihood that they will. It's more probable that they will not. For that reason, you have to think of the alternatives. And you have to think of where this leads you. Israel would retain the large part of the West Bank if it actually withdraws from Gaza, which is not at all certain. The weakness of Abu Mazen is also reflected in the fact that in the very days when the evacuation of Gaza becomes so *actuel*, the bombardment of Israeli colonies both within the Gaza Strip and Israel proper continues. He is not even able to stop that. So, this is where we are.

Now the maze and the complication created by almost 40 years of deeply mistaken Israeli policies are now coming to light for everybody. If you really have a situation for the next 20 or 30 years, some form of an interim, either with or without the agreement of the Palestinians, if 40 years of an interim continue, think of what you can do and the type of society that you live will in. I think that the answer to this question is rather grim. Let us look for a minute at both the political and the ideological factors within the occupied West Bank and the concrete human realities on the ground. Picture close to half a million

Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It is not 200,000, we are speaking of half a million Israeli settlers, almost 8% or 9% of the electorate. This is real political power. Who is strong enough today to overcome it? Sharon isn't. These are the political and ideological factors that we are talking about. Now the concrete realities on the ground are far more complicated than you might imagine. On the West Bank there are about 200 settlements. They are so widely spread out—some of them are in blocks—close to, closer to Israel proper—but others are spread out and make a partition almost impossible today. The best example is Jerusalem itself. If any of you have been in Jerusalem recently, and traveled around, you will have discovered that Jerusalem is hardly capable of being partitioned. The new Jewish quarters on the Eastern side are so widespread and so dispersed in the territory itself that no rational division between them is conceivable. As least nobody has come up with a practical plan here.

[These nations] have been at each others' throats for the past 50 if not 80 years. This is not Luxembourg and Belgium or Holland and Luxembourg. These are two nations that have been at each others' throats. Nobody has come up with a practical *modus vivendi* for that, within a united country of course. Now, I'm trying to convey to you an idea of the Gordian knots that have been created, and the tragic disentanglements that have been created by an irresponsible, provincial, narrow-minded leadership during the past 40 years, leaders who thought they would get away with it. Today you stand amazed, when you look at it in retrospect. You ask yourself, how could serious people, like Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, or the Minister of Defense Dayan, or Golda Meir, who was no fool either, pursue such policies. What did she think she was doing? Because, after 1967, it was possible to make peace. Not merely with Jordan or with Egypt, but also with the Palestinians in the territory, who were ready. But all these possibilities were rejected. The UN ambassador sent identical questionnaires to both Egypt and Israel, asking the Israelis, "are you ready to withdraw from the occupied Sinai Peninsula in return for full peace with Egypt?" He asked the Egyptians, "are you ready to make full peace with Israel, if Israel withdraws from the occupied territory?" The Egyptians said they were ready. The Israelis said they were not. At the very time that Golda Meir, with that acid "maternalism" of hers, was complaining that if only the Arabs would sit down at the table with us, like decent human beings, and discuss this in a civilized manner, everything could be resolved. At the very moment she was saying that, her representatives were sitting with King Hussein, who was ready to make peace with Israel, but Israel wasn't ready to make peace. They wanted to swallow large parts of territory, for reasons that seem understandable at the time. They thought that the borders of 1948 had been insecure, despite the fact that they enabled Israel in 1967 to win an overwhelming victory, not just over one Arab nation, but three. Still, this was a rational consideration, which they took, and which we must respect, even in retrospect. The question is only, how did they think they could live in this new demographic situation that they were creating? Because not only was the territory kept within Israeli rule, it was also densely settled, to the point where there are now almost half a million Israelis living there. Now, I said before, and I may have been too rash, that we were very unlucky with the kind of leadership we had. These were people with no historic point of view, no historic experience, certainly not a European historic experience, which they should have had to have, since they came from here. The history of Europe in the past 150 years has proven that a border is never absolutely secure until it makes the border absolutely insecure for

your neighbor. This was never really seriously considered, and it is a great tragedy that it still hasn't been. That's where we are today, and therefore I think that unless you cut this Gordian knot of which I am speaking, a bi-national state or an apartheid state will become inevitable, and there is no third alternative. I cannot imagine, Mr. Minerbi, what the third alternative is. You're worried about mixed marriages among Jews in Europe and America? This is what you should be worried about.

Now, all polls for the past year or so have proven that the Palestinians are tired. But the same polls also prove that, in their opinion, violence pays off. Before they played out whatever violence they had, they were never offered as many concessions as now.

SERGIO MINERBI:

No, it is simply not true. Camp David is the proof that this.

AMOS ELON:

There is no proof in Camp David at all. If Camp David were a proof, Mr. Barak would have published his map. He never did. So, at the same time, up to this moment, Mr. Luzzatto, the settlements continue to grow. In 2004 alone, the Israeli population of the West Bank has grown by 8%. It nearly doubled since the Oslo Agreement. Now, you might say as a cynic, or since we're in Rome, as a Machiavellian, after all, this is how most new countries were created in the past. France grew out of the Île de France and swallowed everybody around them. America was taken by force by the white settlers. As was Australia, as was New Zealand, and several other places like it. But, I say, this was 3-400 years ago. It was not a colonialist attempt, half a century after the end of colonialism. Israelis have felt safe enough and sure enough of themselves to try and do this, and unless we take care, I am afraid, we'll have to pay the price for this. Imagine what would have happened if, in Northern Ireland, in Ulster, where you have had a similar conflict between two religiously oriented groups over the same territory, not the same, but similar. Now the Protestant population of Ulster, as you know, originated 2-300 years ago, through the often forced arrival of Scottish Protestants. Imagine what would have happened during the British negotiations with Northern Ireland, 3 or 4 years ago, if, at the very time when they were negotiating for a compromise and for peace, Scottish settlers were still being flown over, every day, to Northern Ireland, and settled on confiscated land, owned by Catholics. Do you imagine that a compromise, unsatisfactory as it is, between the Protestants and the Catholics, would still have been possible under these circumstances? I don't think so. For this reason, I am afraid. If what you are concerned about is your identity as a secular Jew, well, I'm worried about my identity as a secular Jew in Israel too. And I'm afraid that I'm in a worse situation than you are. Thank you.

PASQUALE PASQUINO:

I know hardly anything about the political situation in Israel, but I was very intrigued by an interview, published a week ago by *Le Monde*, with a man called Hussein Agha, a Palestinian political scientist who teaches at St. Anthony's college, at Oxford. I found some of his answers very interesting. He claims that Abu Mazen does have a small chance. He's not euphoric or optimistic, but he says that he might have a chance because Palestinians are now tired and, even more, exhausted, because of the second *intifada* and

the conflict with Israel. He argues that Sharon's idea of a unilateral retirement from the Gaza Strip has a chance since it doesn't imply negotiations. His point is that Abu Mazen is too weak now to engage in a negotiation process with Israel, because as Avishai was saying, he will probably not be able to control his people. But if the withdrawal is unilateral, he doesn't have to control anything, because he is not engaged. So Hussein Agha claims that, at least concerning the Gaza Strip, this unilateralism may be a chance. On the other hand, he believes that, concerning the West Bank, it's possible that terrorists will continue to attack Israel, hoping that, at some point in the future, Israel will also withdraw unilaterally from at least part of the West Bank. So he tends to believe that there may be a peace opportunity concerning the Gaza Strip and some ongoing violence in the West Bank. But his point is that this unilateral position of the Israeli government may be a partial solution for the Palestinians. What do you think about that?

AMOS ELON:

Well, he is right to the extent that Sharon wants to do things unilaterally. I would go further than that. Sharon has decided to dictate the final terms of a settlement. This has been the traditional Israeli position. The Israelis have traditionally tried to dictate, rather than negotiate, the terms of a final settlement. And this has never been as true as it is now. I cannot try to *indovinare* the final concept that Sharon has, if he has one, except to stay in power. He may try to dictate the settlement that is indicated by the line of the wall he is now building. That is likely. He wouldn't spend so much money on it if this were not it. And he may make a few minor corrections here and there. Still, this would leave him with a sizeable Palestinian population. You would have a Palestinian majority in Israel, perhaps not in 2020, but in 2025, or at the latest, in 30 years. You would absorb between 50-100,000 or 200,000 more Palestinians. But these are all speculations. Nobody has spelled it out. But I don't see him ready to negotiate a settlement. And the reason why I am so pessimistic is that I don't think that Abu Mazen intends to negotiate a final settlement, since the kind of final settlement that can be negotiated, that is acceptable to the Israelis, is unrealistic. He knows enough of Sharon's intentions and the feelings of most Israelis to know that he hasn't got a chance. So the prospect, in my opinion, is, unfortunately and tragically, a continuation of violence. A small-scale warfare that will go on for many years, with all of the implications and impact that it will have on the nature of Israeli society, the nature of Israeli culture and the composition of the Israeli population. It will affect the growing estrangement between Israeli Arabs, who already constitute about 23-24% of the Israeli population, although some of them may contribute their limbs in surgical operations occasionally. But I wouldn't overvalue this great achievement in Palestinian-Israeli collaboration.

SERGIO MINERBI:

Whatever is positive, you are not valuing at all. That's the spirit.

AMOS ELON:

Yes, it must be. But still, I view the scene darkly. I think I have spelled out the reasons, to my deep sorrow, but that's where we are today. We are stuck in a conundrum that seems almost irresolvable today in practical terms, unless a messianic age is suddenly formed and people give up their racial, religious and national separateness and

prejudice, and the sheep live with the wolves and eat the same straw. If this happens, yes, this is possible. But I don't see it happening for the moment. And I don't see the leadership on either the Palestinian or on the Israeli side that would break this through.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

Well, we are dealing with the most abstract issues, and overly concrete issues, without striking the middle level. We can start with the destiny of the Jews, and the role of Israel in the destiny of the Jews, and then deal with Weissglas's declarations. So the point is, let me just address the two concerns here, briefly, and maybe tomorrow I'll elaborate on some of those things. First, to the first Amos [Luzzatto]. What should be in the center of Jewish life for people in the Diaspora? Should they be terribly concerned about Israel? And people can be concerned because they have attachment, but in what sense should Israel be in the center of Jewish life in Europe and in the United States? And then I shall address my neighbor Amos [Elon], regarding the politics of it.

And let me also start with the long history. The destruction of the temple destroyed a temple state, which was the kind of political organization of the Jews. And it was transformed into a text-centered group and culture. At the center of Jewish life there were texts that were objects of learning to guide in life. And for many years, dispersed Jewish societies were organized around certain texts. And then obviously, there was a revolution in Jewish life with the emancipation. And the point is, from then on, what should be in the center of Jewish life? You mentioned Buber. Buber thought like Achad Haam that you should transform the text-centered life, maybe add centers, but it should be a very loose culturally-based organization, basically retaining a secular version of a text-centered culture. And then there was the idea of creating a Jewish state, or state of the Jews as it was called, and this should be at the center, namely, a political solution for the problem of the Jews.

Israel is bound to disappoint even in the best of times and the best of behavior. And the problem is like what Communism faced with its fellow travelers: whenever you place your fantasy in a concrete political entity, it's bound to disappoint. It will never meet the fantasy of the place, even in the best of times and in the best of behavior. So to organize Jewish life in the Diaspora around the idea of Israel as the center of Jewish life, and expect Israel to fulfill all the fantasies, is bound to fail in the best of times. Not to mention in the kind of situation in which Israel is in now, but in the best of times. That was always the problem of fellow travelers always. You close rank. We don't want the capitalists or the Gentiles to hear what we talk about, but we know the score. And closing the ranks—you can keep it up for one generation, in a revolution, but then the secret is out, and you cannot raise kids on this kind of hypocrisy. That's in the best of times. Then there was the danger on the part of secular Jews of creating a Holocaust-centered culture. Namely that we will all be venerating the Holocaust, and this is something that won't disappoint us. We were the ultimate victims. I mean, we are on the cross. No one can compete with us in suffering and this will be the center of Jewish life. This is also a horrible prospect for Jewish life. I think that what unites Jews, secular or non-secular, is a community of memory. And memory should be very, very important. But the issue of what to place at the center of Jewish life, apart from ethnic relation and making sure the kids marry Jews, is also highly problematic and it won't last. So one concern, which is a

very serious concern, is what - if you want some ideal, out of a sense of solidarity and sense of extended family - to put in the center. That's a genuine concern.

Another concern is, what should be the politics of Israel and what kind of a society should it be? And I think that whatever Jews in Europe will decide, I think they should hedge their bet against your point. I think Gomel is absolutely right. I think they should hedge their bet, they can't make Israel an object of veneration and make life conditional on whether Israel will behave or not behave, or on what Israel will do in the West Bank or not. There should be content to life, and they should find something for the center of their life that will be meaningful to Jewish life. I don't want them to cut ties with Israel. I want Jewish solidarity to be with all communities, but I think it would be a bad mistake, it's not Babylon Jews...that's not what I mean. I didn't give you an answer - what should be at the center - but what I am saying is, don't rush and make the connection too easy between what should be the center of Jewish life here and what should be the relation with Israel.

Now as to the politics of Israel, and how pessimistic should we be? According to Amos, we cannot be too pessimistic, because there are always good reasons to be pessimistic, and the story from 1967 is quite a depressing story. But I don't buy a good deal of what Amos said, almost on factual grounds. There is no increase in real terms in the last four years in the settlements. Let me explain. I will contest him fact by fact. It's true that there was a nominal increase of 9%, in three or four ultra-religious cities or towns in the territories: one of them is a kilometer out of the Green Line, one of them is a kilometer and a half. Between 25-30% of the population in the West Bank are now in ultra-orthodox towns. I don't find it a very serious problem, technically, to solve. There was a decline in the settlement themselves, in actual terms. It doesn't mean that people left the settlements. They left the settlements to go to Israel, retained houses that they could not sell. Many of the settlements that I went to are ghost towns. To think that in four years of *intifada* there was no decline! Now it's in the interest of both the left and the settlers - and the Palestinians - to exaggerate the situation in the settlements, each one for different reasons. There was a decline, and there will be a decline, as long as the *intifada* is going on. Whenever people talk about solutions, like when Rabin negotiated on the Golan Heights, there is always a declaration of a new construction of buildings. The construction of buildings is at the beginning, because one way of making things simpler for the government is to declare that they are in the project of increasing certain...so you can easily tie whatever you want into the numbers. The actual numbers in the real settlements have declined in the last four years.

AMOS ELON:

What's your source for this sensational information?

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

That's something that I investigated, I wrote about it. I didn't deny your numbers. I said there was an increase. The point is where the increase is. Where the increase is in places that cannot disentangle, these are real problems. So you gave a global number, not a detailed account of where. So I didn't deny your global number.

[Is it possible that] the *intifada* didn't affect people whether people are willing to go and settle or not? That in 4 years, when going on those roads is so dangerous,

everyone is that crazy to go there and settle? I mean, just sheer common sense will tell you that it can't be true. So in a way, things were pretty frozen. Israelis talk about 220,000 settlers, they don't take East Jerusalem into account, the Palestinians say that all those across the Green Line are settlers, that's the half a million, and then you made them a constituency of 9%, as if all the people who live in Mount Scopus or the French Hill are one constituency with all the settlers inside the Green Line. That's not a serious account. Jerusalem is a serious problem, but a different problem, both by the way that the Palestinians addressed it in Camp David, and the way the Israelis addressed it. So there are enough reasons to be pessimistic without your account. Things are bad enough without this account.

Now let me say something about the situation. It's true what Amos said about Weissglas. He came out with this statement. After Sharon leaked through the same sources that the reasons he is evacuating the Gaza Strip – a week before – is because there was pressure to negotiate on the Golan Heights, and to stop that pressure to negotiate. The day the Weissglas interview came out, one of Sharon's closest friends, Landau, said on Channel 7, the settlers' radio, "don't think that this is the end of the evacuation. We will have to evacuate the West Bank." On the same day. Two days later, Ehud Olmert, the deputy, said, "don't kid yourself that that's the end of the evacuation. We will have to evacuate most of the West Bank," and his numbers were almost very close to the wall, which is about 14-15% of the West Bank, at that time. So obviously, you can find quotations for whatever position, and they serve lots of purposes. You might be right, you might be wrong, if you want your position to be substantiated by a quotation, you can find a quotation. My advice is, forget about the quotation, and the explanation of intention, and look at the reality now. What can be done now? What are people doing in fact?

I think that something important is happening. It didn't happen yet. And that's the evacuation of the 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip and 4 in the West Bank. This is not the beginning of a beautiful friendship, of peace or anything of the sort. The importance of the evacuation, if it happens - and I have no reason to doubt that all the steps that Sharon takes are leading to evacuation - is to prove that you can evacuate. No one has evacuated up until now, apart from Sharon in the Sinai Agreement. The problem is that if Sharon cannot evacuate, no one can evacuate in any foreseeable future. If he succeeds, it's not terribly important. If he fails, it's dramatic. Because if he cannot, I don't see how anyone can. As one of the rabbis of the settlers said, "it's our Stalingrad." Namely, they know that if they succeed now in blocking the evacuation, they've won their case, that's the end of the story. Then I think that it leads to an apartheid state, lock, stock and barrel.

So, you have cases and situations in history that have this kind of logic. Let me give an example. If you accept Turkey into the EU, it is one thing. But if you fail, if you reject Turkey from the EU, the relation with the Islamic world, and the consequences in terms of the clash between Islam will be immense. Here we have a political Islam that is trying to behave, to join the club, and you reject them. So there are cases, in which when you do something, it's not terribly important. But when you fail to do it, it can have tremendous consequences. If Sharon will evacuate the settlement, that's not peace. If he fails, it has immense consequences. So what is now on the agenda is not peace negotiations between Sharon and Abu Mazen. That's not even remotely in the cards. The only thing on the agenda is whether he will evacuate. If he fails this, that's the end of the

story. If he succeeds, we don't know, at least something happened, that gives an opportunity for the next generation. So the issue is not the battle of quotations. I think we all are very eager to come up with numbers, and make it so difficult and so intractable. It is very difficult, and if Sharon evacuates the Gaza Strip, it doesn't mean that we have won in the West Bank. The West Bank will be a tremendous fight, which can lead Israel genuinely to the verge of a civil war. At least for the ideological hard core of the settlements, about 25,000 people, with their constituency, which is quite a large constituency inside Israel, about 20-30% of the population. This is a serious point. I didn't say that was a guarantee that something will happen. But what is on the agenda now, to my mind, is whether the evacuation will take place. And that's of crucial importance, only in one direction, if it fails. If it succeeds, it's not momentous. Something happened, not momentous. That's my reading of the situation.

So between these two minds, Weissglas's declarations, whether they are true or not, whether to accept them as an explanation of Sharon's intention, and on what to bet in Jewish life...I wouldn't tie the two too strictly together, the way you tried to do. To hedge your bets, Israel is strong enough to at least address its problem. You should address your problem. I don't say, be alienated, don't feel for the place. But don't tie the things the way you wanted it to be tied. I think what Jews in the Diaspora should look at is really to find some content in their Jewishness. Not just make it family ties. And not just make it Israel-centered, but find some content to it as a community of memory and a community of synagogue.

AMOS ELON:

Avishai, everyone will agree with you that if they don't evacuate the Gaza Strip, it will be a disaster. But we are not talking now about messianic days. This is a question of, "so what's your outlook if he withdraws from Gaza?"

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

Genuinely, I believe that there is a change in part of the right in Israel: Sharon, Olmert. I think it's a change

AMOS ELON:

How do you know? You're talking about facts all the time, and you are giving us imponderables. You have personally visited every single settlement and you have discovered that the population has gone down, contrary to the official statistics published by the government? Contrary to the fact that, although the population goes down, and there are ghost towns, the government continues to build everywhere, and it's not just foundations, but it's whole houses and whole quarters? These are figures that cannot be denied. Fine, maybe you are right, but tell us, what will happen after he withdraws?

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

You ask me two questions. One, you challenge my analysis about what is happening in the settlements. Now you shift the ground. What I'm telling you is that, people are actually leaving the settlements. Apart from, as I said, the three or four main towns near the Green Line, there is a decline. People left. They say that 20% of settlers don't live there. They own the house, they are still registered. You won't get these

numbers, because it's not in the interest of anyone to get these numbers. Can you imagine that four years of this *intifada* left things intact in those settlements, and that they only grew? Doesn't it stand to reason?

AMOS ELON:

Avishai, by the same token you can say that four years of *intifada* have increased the extremism there. If I own property somewhere, and somebody wants to take it away from me, I'm not going to become more liberal.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

Liberal? First we ask how many people are there. We didn't ask what, how...

GIORGIO GOMEL:

Just a point of information. The official Israeli statistics come from the Central Bureau of Statistics. Only if you declare that you change the place of residence, e.g. a settler declares a change in residence from the territories to Haifa, then this is officially recorded as someone leaving the settlements.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

No one changes his residence, and there are two reasons for this. First, there is no one to sell the house to. Second, you wait to see if something will happen, because then you get compensation. So, obviously what I'm saying is impressionistic, by which I mean, very impressionable. The people whom I know in the settlements say that there is a decline in the actual number of people living in the settlement, but they don't declare it to the public. You go, you see. I went to enough places to see. I went to one place that was genuinely a ghost town. I don't deny the numbers. The issue is where the numbers are. You can have an increase in the number of the settlements. By your account, if there are more people living now in the French Hill, that's an increase in the settlers. But if you increase that by 20%, you won't change the geopolitical situation. But if you increase the ideological settlements in the Samaria, that's a serious matter. So, I'm not denying your numbers, the 8%. The point is, where are the 8%? There is an increase, but what matters is the meaning of the increase.

Then you ask me, what do I see in the future? That's a different question. If there is an evacuation, I can see a change in the political structure of Israel. I think that something penetrated to the heart of people like Sharon, like Olmert. They say it. I haven't invented this. I think that it's the first time they started talking about the demographic problem. And I think that the main reason for their fear is the demographic problem. That's the only thing that really convinced them. Not the occupation, and not the immorality of it. It's the demographic problem. They don't see a solution. The demography is very clear. The demography is such that in Israel in 2050 to 2020, the Jews in between the sea and the Jordan Valley will be about 40, 42, 43%. And I believe that this created a change in some of them, including Sharon. And Sharon now, to my mind, wants to determine the borders, and leave a legacy of determinate borders. I think that he was very much against the wall. Six months before he authorized the wall, he gave a talk to officers of the border police, saying that it's a phony thing, that it won't defend anyone. He was ferociously against the wall. Then he suddenly saw that, through

the wall, he could determine the borders. What is surprising is that the pace of building the wall now, in the last five months, decreased.

AMOS ELON:

Well, that's because of the Supreme Court...

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

No, it was only in one part, not in the South. I expected him to increase the pace in building the wall. And that hasn't happened. And if he wanted to stop the Supreme Court, he could have done so by passing a law in the Knesset. For some reason, which surprised me, there is a slowdown in the building. The whole idea that Sharon got a free hand to have whatever he wants in the West Bank didn't materialize. You may say it was before the election in the U.S. and he didn't want to embarrass Bush. But as a matter of fact, he slowed down. Even a part of the budget that was allocated for the wall wasn't spent up to now. So I think that there is something forming in the center. I don't think that Sharon can conclude a peace agreement with Abu Mazen, I agree. And his role now is to evacuate. Then we'll face a serious problem, but at least we'll face a different problem: that at least one thing was proven. That it's political option to evacuate. And the way you go, it becomes insignificant, and I believe it's significant. You ask me, how do you know? My claim is, how come the settlers, and all the parties that advocate for the settlers, turned against Sharon? If it's so obvious that what he is doing is only to increase their hand in the West Bank, he's their ally. So you protest against the evacuation, you simulate protest, but you don't leave the government. These are old hands. They are not irrational. They know Israeli politics better than anyone else. How come they interpret Sharon in the way that I do? If it's so fantastic for the settlers - an immense increase in settlements by your description, evacuating Gaza, which is a nuisance even in their eyes, and strengthening their hand in the West Bank - why don't they support Sharon? How come they are against Sharon, on the verge of a civil war? What do you know about the West Bank that they don't? They are there. You are not there. How come they are against Sharon? My interpretation of Sharon is that the settlers got him absolutely right. People that work with him since 1967, all his aides. They know the score and they are right. I think that their analysis is absolutely right on target. They know that the evacuation is dangerous. So, if it's the way you describe it, they should be his allies, making just a ritualistic fuss, simulating protest, because they are against evacuation, and that's it. But you know that it's not a game. How do you know? They left the government. What, to replace him with Peres, that's better? My reading of Sharon is that of settlers. Weissglas wanted to convince the settlers that Sharon is good for them. So I am suggesting something very simple: see what the settlers say. They get it absolutely right. They know the score. They know what's on the ground. And they know now that Sharon - the father of the settlements - is a problem and an obstacle for them. So, you ask me, what's the source of my information? The settlers are my source.

AMOS ELON:

I don't think it's as good a source as the central office of statistics. And I don't see the civil war either. There are a few dozen officers who have made sensational announcements, and they have been thrown out of the army, but I don't see the civil war

really. I believe that you overestimate the logic of these settlers. Won't you agree that the settlers can also make mistakes, like the government has made mistakes for the past 40 years?

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

You know two things. All the settlers that lobby in the government left the government. You know that there is a revolt in the Likud. You know that all the settlers are against Sharon. So what do you know that they don't know? I object to the argument: "well they are religious fanatics, therefore they don't understand politics." That's like saying about the Christian moral majority that they don't understand how to manipulate American politics. That's ridiculous. On average, they know the score better than most people in Israel. I don't see Lieberman not understanding politics. So, the issue is not whether they are rational or a bunch of zealots who don't understand politics. We know Sharon and we know the score. But they know something. They obviously know the situation on the ground. They know that in the last four years, the *intifada* seriously hurt the situation in the settlements. And you won't get it by the numbers. I didn't deny that there was an increase. You didn't give me counterargument for what I just said.

GIORGIO GOMEL:

I tend to side with Dr. Margalit. The opposition of the settlers is actually a very concrete indicator of the importance and seriousness of the withdrawal from Gaza. This limited evacuation is a very dangerous precedent for them. They use this rhetoric – the evacuation must be opposed because it is a reward for terror. We must not evacuate, because this will show that Hamas is winning, the same way as with the Hezbollah in Lebanon five years ago. This is the false and misleading political argument that they use. The truth is that it is indeed a dangerous precedent. It could be the beginning of the end of the occupation, if that unleashes further momentum for withdrawing from the West Bank. That is to be seen in reality and we are all rather skeptical around this table, but it could be the beginning of the end of the occupation. Because you might show that you can evacuate the settlers, that the Israeli army withdraws, that this is done more or less peacefully, maybe not unilaterally, but by negotiating it with the Palestinians, and that they're able to manage their affairs in an orderly fashion. There are many ifs here. But, my conjecture is that something can be achieved in the West Bank, if pressure is exerted by the international community, and also domestically by the Israeli public opinion. Once the withdrawal is carried out and the Palestinians manage this embryonic form of state in the Gaza Strip, this will be an indication that something could happen in the West Bank. My question to you is: what kind and what degree of violence can one expect from the most militant of the settlers in order to block the evacuation? Two days ago, the army dismissed 30 reserve officers who declared their refusal to evacuate the settlers. This is a positive development; it shows that instigation to violence and refusal will be checked. But still, we don't really know. So I'm asking you, should we fear an explosion of violence? Could one conceive of the settlers taking up arms and fighting the Israeli army that would evacuate them? Maybe not in Gaza, but in the West Bank?

SERGIO MINERBI:

In Itamar a week ago, you almost had a clash. I have the impression that there is a serious preoccupation in the government Office of the Legal Advisor, and that was the first time that they indicted people from the right for incitement. And we saw it two days ago. We had a mass demonstration in Jerusalem, which blocked the area of the Knesset and much more, with all the rabbis of Judea and Samaria present. I listened very carefully to what you said and mostly I agree. This means that not only the settlers, but also the rabbis are behind them. And this means that the influence is much bigger, because the rabbis have influence, upon for instance the Yeshivoth hesder, these particular religious groups who are in the army and generally in elite units. So, I would not underestimate the problem of those rabbis and the fact that Sharon managed to have at least a part of *ya-hadut hatorah* (a religious party) inside the government, with Rabbi Eliyashiv, who has a very great appeal from the religious point of view. Yesterday, the budget was approved by the Knesset, with 64 against 53 votes. Without the approval of the budget, the government would fall. The rebels of Likud did vote with the government. Which means that, in the final moment when their seat is in danger, they understand that it is better not to go to elections, in order not to jeopardize their own seat.

I would like to stress two or three points. One, the idea of a unilateral move, which was launched by Sharon some months ago, now appears to be the only one capable of starting a new process. And here, we heard that it could be useful to the Palestinians, at least in the beginning, not to have to face their own public opinion with the negotiations with Israel, because, in the meantime, the evacuation should go on anyway. This is an important point. I do hope, that in the last moment before the evacuation, there will be a coordination between the Israeli authorities and the Palestinian authorities, because it is much better for everybody that such a coordination will take place, and hopefully, that it will be successful. Nobody can be sure of it, because, in the meantime, the people in Sderot are receiving Kassam missiles on their heads everyday. And this is not very pleasant. Even if it is mostly a psychological effect, it's not very pleasant.

Now, the question of whether the Palestinians will behave, or, in other words, whether terrorism will cease or not, is a major question. I am not saying that - as is it written in the Road Map - they should first stop terrorism, and then Israel should also stop the illegal settlements, and so on. But I am saying that if there should be one or two explosions in the near future, a lot of hopes will vanish. And we have seen in the last ten years, that every time there is a possibility of negotiation, there is someone on the Palestinian side who is interested in blocking it. The unilateral history that you have presented is very beautiful to calm your conscience, but it's not true to the facts. Peres was Prime Minister. He had to resign when the elections came because of three or four buses and coffee shops in Tel Aviv that exploded on the eve of the elections. And this is not the only case. We have a series of cases when Palestinian terrorists came at the wrong moment, from the point of view of the peace process. But if it was true - and it is not - that Palestinians are getting more concessions from Israel because of violence, why is Abu Mazen now preaching to the Palestinians that violence has been very harmful to the Palestinians' interests? Either he does not know his own people, or somebody here does not know them. So I guess he knows what he says, and he even stressed that one Kassam missile killed one Palestinian girl of 8 a week ago, so we are facing a situation in which the violence of the Palestinians has systematically ruined themselves, first of all, more

than it has harmed Israel. Israel finished last year with a 4.2% increase in GNP. Naturally, there is a lot to be said about the social situation. But the situation of the Palestinian economy is much, worse, and they have to blame themselves first of all. The only transit point between the Gaza Strip and the world – the only one which gives them the possibility of receiving supplies and sending their products abroad - has been the objective of two terrorist attacks in the last three months. So if this can in any way support the idea that they are getting more with violence, it's a stupidity. The Eres Industrial Common Area, which has been the only work opportunity for 4,000 Palestinian workers, had to shut down because of three consecutive terrorist attacks on this joint common industrial area, with Palestinian and Israeli plants working side by side, and with Palestinian workers. Now, it's finished, and they have only the Hamas and the Jihad to thank. So, I am not so sure that the Palestinians really believe that violence brought them any advantage whatsoever. And even when mothers are praising their children for becoming *shaheedim*, Mrs. Rantisi, the wife of the Hamas chief, was asked, "would you approve that your son – who is 15 – would become a *shaheed*?" she said, "absolutely not." And this is a very good propaganda for others. And so I have a slightly different impression. Maybe there were Israeli governments which were not keen to seize the opportunities for peace. It is possible that this was also the consequence of lack of credibility in the Arab world. Each time there were enough reasons to believe that the Arab engagement would not be worth the paper it was written on. Nevertheless, there is a peace treaty with Egypt, which has been respected by both sides, by and large, in all these years. There is a peace treaty with Jordan, and there could be a peace treaty with Lebanon tomorrow morning if Syria would agree. The whole question of Syria, I guess you will speak about it tomorrow, so I am not entering it now, but it is an interesting issue as well.

I think that most of Arab terrorism is not even against Israel. It is first of all to gain popularity in the Palestinian Arab society. It's a form of political propaganda inside the Palestinian society. Why should we pay for it? This is a different question.

AMOS ELON:

Propaganda or pressure?

SERGIO MINERBI:

Pressure, but the fact is that since there were no parties, no democracy, no possibilities of having the regular committee, the way was to show that you were stronger, more important and that you kill more Israelis. Now, Mr. Elon, I will tell you a secret. Inside the Palestinian society, to be popular, you must appear as somebody who killed more Jews. Insofar as this is true, there will be no peace. It doesn't matter how peaceful the Israeli government will be, there will be absolutely no peace. If Abu Mazen or somebody else succeeds in changing this frame of mind, and in thinking that cooperation or symbiosis is better – no matter whether there is someone working at Intel or not, this is not the point. The point is whether cooperation is by and large better than killing people. This is the question. If they will be convinced in their heart, then I have real hope that it will be heard. If not, there will be no peace. By the way, I listened very carefully to your exposé. Whether it is pessimistic or optimistic, I only ask myself, what is your solution? What do you suggest? Nothing. So, I must confess, I was not very enthusiastic, but perhaps tomorrow I will be. Thank you very much.

AMOS ELON:

But what are you suggesting? Why do you expect me to find a solution to a problem that was created? Do you have a solution for it? Of course not. You expect the Palestinians to have fewer children.

PASQUALE PASQUINO:

I think that it was a privilege for me and probably for all of us to listen to this conversation. If you agree, we will continue tomorrow morning, and Avishai will start. We will come back to the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora. But I want to tell you what I believe on this point. We Europeans, we care about Israel. It's not the Diaspora only. Because like Mr. Minerbi, who I suppose was born here in Rome, I am sad for all who died, and for all whom we have lost. And we would be much worse off if things go bad in Israel. That's not just your problem. That's our problem as Europeans, because the Jews are part of Europe. Luzzatto says in his book on the Jewish identity that one century and a half ago 92% of the Jews were in Europe. And I consider the future of Israel important to the future of Europe. It's not just a question of the Diaspora, it's our question, our future, that it is at stake.

Friday, 14 January 2005

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

I would like to talk about the topic of our conference, "the future of Israel." And I would to start with a number that was presented yesterday, that the economic gross in Israel last year was 4.1 or 4.2%. And I would like first to start with the economic price of the latest *intifada*. Israel before the *intifada*, in terms of personal income per year - and I have Gomel here to check me - was equal to Ireland. And the comparison is very important, because Ireland and Israel were both launched on the project of high tech. So when the bubble burst, it affected both communities, and yet, now, after the *intifada*, the discrepancies between Ireland and Israel are between \$8-10,000 per person. That's a huge price. Israel stagnated for five years. Completely stagnated. And it's true that there was a gross increase last year, because it became quieter. And I'm not talking about price in human terms, in real terms, in blood. I'm just talking about economic price. The Palestinians were utterly devastated during this *intifada*. Because the attack wasn't just on terrorists or insurgents, or whatever term we use, but it was an attack on the whole community. There was a massive, collective punishment. And the Palestinians were utterly devastated. To the point that in the Gaza Strip, the personal income per year is \$800, and in the West Bank it's \$1200. It depends how we count. Those are gross numbers. So the two communities are bleeding, metaphorically and not metaphorically. And in Hebrew we can play a pun on *damim*, which is both money and blood. The two communities are bleeding very badly. I started with the economic issue, because I think it hovers over most of our discussion.

The Israeli society, from its beginning, was gnarled in three basic conflicts: the conflict between Jews and Arabs; the conflict between religious and secular; the conflict from Jews who came from Islamic countries and Ashkenazi Jews, those who came from Europe and their descendents. These are three conflicts. Each one of them can blow up a society. And perhaps what maintained the equilibrium in Israeli society is not that there was one conflict, but that there were three. And each of the various conflicts produced different coalitions. But these three tensions are immense. And they obviously, in some form or another, are there to stay. What form they take is crucial. But they are there to stay.

But I started with the economic perspective, because one of the main tensions which overlaps all three that I just mentioned - and what I think to be the tormentor to the future of Israel and for the area in general - is the tension not just between poor and rich - that doesn't explain it - but between what I'll call the globalized people and the unglobalized, or unglobalizeable. Those who can be wired and be economically relevant to the world economy, and those who are left behind, who are not part of the world economy. This actually started before the *intifada*. And there are lots of people inside Israel who decided not to become part of the global economy, like the ultra-orthodox (who could join the world economy in terms of learning capability, but have chosen not to). There are also many Jews who came from Islamic countries and their descendants, and the Arab community in Israel. So half of the population in Israel is either not globalized or nor globalizeable, and half of the population roughly - and I include the Russian Jews, the Ashkenazi, the old sons and daughters of the veterans, this account is very crude - is, or potentially can be, a part of the world economy. Many people who lost in some sense in the economic arena try to make up for it in the political arena. In the economic arena, one shekel or one dollar or one Euro is one vote. In politics, it's one man or one woman, one vote. So, it's like the Irish in America. When they were lagging behind, they tried to promote themselves through politics and police. And many of those groups try to gain what they do not gain in economics through politics and the allocation of resources from the state.

Now, with the demise of the welfare system in Israel - and Israel is a welfare state - this brings more and more tasks to the communities, and creates a "sectarial" politics and sectarian politics, and it becomes the politics of identities. Namely lots of people try to promote their hold on resources and on the society through the politics of identity. And there is a tremendous anxiety among lots of people who are lagging behind economically, that if peace and normalization come, they will be forgotten. It's the peace of the rich. Of the middle class. And Jewish solidarity is their basis for being looked after, economically and politically. So the anxiety, the fact that the peace process, at the time, happened with the demise of the welfare state, was lethal in my mind. Because there was a fear - and I think a genuine fear, a rational fear - that there would be very little for them in the peace. That what keeps at least the minimal sense of Israeli solidarity among Jews is the fact that we are under siege against the Arabs. There was very little concern about Palestinians, but also about the Arab Israelis. As if they are there, but there was no sense of solidarity with them. And what we have in our society is something that you have in Europe, that you have in America: two senses of arrangements of a welfare state, or insurance. One is the idea of insurance, namely you bring here *Gastarbeiter*, guest workers, and they join in because lots of Italians don't want to work in dirty jobs, as they call it, and someone

has to pay for the pensions of the old people. And you bring them in as a sort of insurance, but not out of solidarity. You don't feel like you have to feel solidarity. And the best thing would be to expel them the minute that they did their services. The idea of insurance in Israel won't work. The basis should be solidarity. And the issue of solidarity among people in Israel, and the solidarity with the Jews abroad, is a crucial issue. The issue is not identity, who is a Jew? The issue is, what is the basis of Jewish solidarity? Why have a sense of solidarity?

What I started describing as the demise of the welfare system happened also among Arabs, and among the Palestinians. And it so happened that in both communities, in the ultra-orthodox community, both the Ashkenazi and the Sephardic ultra-orthodox, and among Arabs, religious communities took over and started providing the welfare system. It's the Hamas in Gaza, and it's Shas in Israel. And they operate more or less in the same way, on the basis of solidarity. They provide services on a low level, but to all. And they care about the people. This, with the rise of political Islam, created or creates a shift in the nature of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Namely, by transferring it from a national conflict into a religious warfare. And my claim is that the main thing is to stop the conflict from deteriorating from the nationalist dimension into religious warfare. Religious warfare is a much more dangerous proposition than a nationalist one.

Let me say something here about the religious element of the conflict, and the fear, my fear, of the religious conflict, why the religious conflict is so dangerous to my mind. If you look at the Arab regimes, there is one form of regime to all Arab regimes. And it doesn't matter if the head of state is a king or a president – or a president that bequeaths the presidency to his son – the main structure of the Arab regime is what I call “*muhabarat*” regime. *Muhabarat* is an Arabic term for their internal security apparatus, the secret services, parts of the army, some of the bodyguards of the elite units. It's a *muhabarat* regime. The main idea is to keep the regime going. And the main consideration is internal security. It's not the army, it's not a military dictatorship. The *muhabarat* regime has very little cultural or symbolic content. It can be efficient. It can be brutal, like Saddam Hussein's *muhabarat* regime, or it can be relatively benign and reasonable, like in Jordan. But the structure is the same. The element nowadays, after the demise of the Soviet bloc and the secular ideologies of the left in the Arab world, the only candidates now for making a bid on the regime are the religious groups. Some form of political Islamism. And I think it's true that the main concern of those movements is internal struggle. The conflict with Israel, like striking in New York, is not to convert New Yorkers into Islamists, to Islam. The main thing is propaganda by action. To create the impression that those *muhabarat* regimes cannot be supported by America in the long run, they are vulnerable, and that we can strike and create an Islamic revolution in our country. And there are two types of revolution. One is Khomeini, meaning a Stalinist notion of spreading Islam from one country to another. Or there is the Trotskyite idea of spreading, like the Bin Laden thing. What matters is that religious war is unlike nationalist war; secular ideologies are 5-year plans ideologies. You have to succeed or not succeed in a range of 5-10 years. In a religious war, you increase the stake immensely, but postpone the day of payment. We fought against the crusaders for 200 years, we can fight against the Zionists and the Americans for 200 years.

The intensity of the religious war can be such that the terms of the conflict are absolutist. Like the way that Hamas described it, and like the way that it happened in Israel. And in both societies, you see a convergence of two elements and two trends among the religious people. In the Islamic world, there were just Islamic conservatives, deeply religious conservatives with very little interest in politics. Namely, what they care about was Islamic morality, which meant sexual morality in the public space, that woman should be properly dressed, the public space should be Islamic. Then there were the political Islamists, who cared about the politics of it. They converge now. The political Islamists become more conservative, and the conservatives become more political Islamists. In Israel it happens in the same way. The political religious Zionists converging and becoming more ultra-orthodox, and the ultra-orthodox become more nationalistic. They are not nationalistic on Zionist grounds, but they are against the Arabs; they are the gentiles and that's good enough. So, even people who were anti-Zionist for years become very nationalistic, but not Zionist. Anti-Arab. That's the content of their nationalism. My fear is that the conflict, if it goes on – and it's very hard to know where we are on the curve at this point, whether it's too late or not – will turn from a nationalist conflict into a religious conflict. And that became more pronounced after September 11. We are part of a crusade on the one hand, and part of a jihad on the other. And that's lethal for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Now obviously, political Islam is not just about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it's an evocative symbol of the struggle. And our main task is to remove it as an evocative symbol. I didn't say that this will end conflicts with Islam, that's ridiculous. But there's no question that it's evocative. When Bin Laden gave his famous interview to al-Jazeera in 1999, and gave the six demands, Israel was somewhere at the bottom. Now it's at the top of the list, because he discovered the evocative power of Israel as a recruiting element. And it's all about recruitment, like striking at the tower in New York. I think that the challenge - which is very much against the Israeli psyche - is how to reduce the profile of the conflict. As long as we keep the profile that high, we transform it into an intractable conflict. And then there will be very little to talk about the future of Israel. I don't know whether there is a window of opportunity or not. What I do know is that we are in the last days of when the conflict is still ambiguous between the two.

Now let me say something about the nature of the conflict. There are two types of conflict. One is between states: Israel *vis à vis* Egypt, Israel *vis à vis* Syria, Israel *vis à vis* Jordan. It's about interests: water, land, borders, economic arrangements, whatever. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is not a conflict between states. And Oslo created this illusion, as if we externalized the conflict: there is a Palestinian Authority, there is Israel, and it's another conflict in which you have to negotiate borders and this and that. This is inter-communal strife, more akin to a civil war than to a conflict between states. And the illusion that there is the semi-state, and that Israel is facing a semi-state, and let's work this out and negotiate, that's an illusion. Inter-communal strife, like in Ireland, Cyprus, that's the kind. Inter-communal strife, like all civil wars, is very, very bitter. And it is very bitter because of the nature of the strife. It's not about interests. It's about who we are, who they are. It's about everything. You negotiate, and you understand your identity by the conflict. And the point is, how to transform the conflict with the Palestinians into a normal conflict? And create the Palestinian state. A Palestinian state won't solve much, but it will change the nature of the conflict. It has the

potential to externalize the conflict. Inter-communal strife is a very dangerous proposition in the long run.

Now what we were discussing yesterday is the point at which we are in the conflict. There are 9-10 million people between the Jordan River and the sea. It's not even clear that there's a majority of Jews. And it doesn't matter, because in some sense, if you disenfranchise the others, who cares about the exact numbers. But in the long run, it's very clear what will happen. If what is going to happen is the kind of political arrangement that took root in '67, with no hope of changing it, the only way to run it (Israeli fears of a bi-national state are rational, because a bi-national state can be an invitation to a civil war, like in Lebanon, where Jews will lose their strength. I'm talking non-moralistically, but as descriptively, as much as I can) will be as an apartheid state. The way to run it is the way that South Africa was run. It will be always declared that there's a peace process, there's something waiting in the future, in order not to declare Israel – Israel can't be presented in the world as a straightforward apartheid state. But in fact it will be very, very clear, that what happened and what will still be presented as transitory, will be the reality. I'm not talking about whether we can go on with it, whether the world will allow us. All the time here about intervention, American and European intervention. It's for the birds up till now. It can go on for quite a while. For many Israelis and many Jews in the Diaspora, that's an Israel that there's no reason to promote or entertain or with which to feel solidarity. That's the end of anything with which anyone should feel solidarity or attachment to. The reality will be that Israel is just an apartheid state. There will be terror attacks and counter-attacks. There will be calls for special measures, and you will have to control the population, and it will be very dangerous. And it will always be true. It's not that it will always be fabricated, like the Americans did with Saddam. Not imaginary threats, but real threats. There will be a real threat. On a daily basis. So I believe that we are really in the last days or years of still having an option to reverse things. And I said to Amos, I don't buy the idea that the political geography now determines that it's too late or impossible. I think that there is an option, now, to create a two-state solution. The amazing thing is that both sides know what the solution is. It is very clear. There is no mystery. Clinton's bridge proposal, in December, before the *intifada*, is the solution, plus or minus 1% here and there. There is no mystery about the solution. There is no one sane person in the area or abroad that doesn't think that this is more or less the solution.

I believe that 70% of the Israelis can live with this solution. Some of them with joy. Some of them with trembling, but they will accept it. I believe that 70% of the Palestinians will accept it. How do I know? I don't know. Partly by polls, partly by talking, like all impressions. What is interesting is that, up till now, the leaderships weren't part of this 70%. On both sides. There was no way to translate those majorities into a viable politics to make this solution stick. So the issue is not the majority, and it is not the solution. There is not much to discuss. I don't believe that enough facts on the ground were created that there is no solution to the conflict, to a two-state solution. I agree that Jerusalem is a problem. I don't think that I have a better solution. But it doesn't matter. No one asked me about it. I will not be the one to determine a solution. I am saying that the sense, of most people, is that the realm of negotiation is very, very limited.

Let me end with something about Sharon, and Sharon's politics. And let me give the best account for his thinking. Sharon doesn't believe, or at least didn't believe for a

long time, that the Palestinians would accept any partition. That even if Israel rolled back to the force of June '67, the Palestinians wouldn't accept it in the long run. They may accept it temporarily, Israel will roll back, but the irredentist element...there will be D'Annunzio first claiming the Fiume, and then there will be the march on Rome, or Jerusalem, or whatever. The *irredenta* will be so strong, that they won't accept it. Why? Because they won't tolerate the possibility that they are left in the best possible world with 22% of the whole of Palestine, and the Israelis left with all the rest. They won't accept it. 22% is not a territorial base for a state for them. So they need a territorial base. Fauyeev (?) thought that for the territorial base, the basic thing is Jordan. There is a majority of Palestinians there. This should be the territorial base. You can negotiate with them on the permanent solution, once they have their territorial base. And at the time he tried to destabilize Jordan, he thought that this was part of the war in Lebanon. Create something of a Palestinian state, and then negotiate. That was the fantasy. Now, he knows that it's totally unacceptable, and the Americans know it. He can't push this problem. So he believes that, in the long run, there will be a Palestinian state in Jordan, or something like it, and so all you have to agree to now is a long-range, temporary agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. And then he vacillated about the numbers. Once it was half and half, or even 60% to Israel and 40% to the Palestinians, then 50-50, then 45%. He may even end up at 30, and that's more or less what he started toying with. And trying to unilaterally determine an interim agreement, with the idea that there is one seductive element innate to the Palestinians, while the Labor party and all the left made it very hard for the Palestinians. He doesn't make any ideological claims for them. They don't have to give anything ideological. They only have to stop terror and somehow divide the land. But no one makes ideological concessions. That, I think, was the fantasy. I think that, realistically speaking, there is a change in him. I can't prove it. I think there is a change in his vision. It's still temporary. He still doesn't think he can reach an agreement. But the numbers shifted because I think that the demography dawned on him, that it's a serious problem, from his perspective and the perspective of the right. So I think that he's now trying to move at least in the direction of working out some kind of temporary agreement. Whether it can work or not, I don't believe that it can work. But, as I said, we are talking about the coming 18 months to two years or so. And in the two years, what we can expect, if anything, is the dismantling of the settlements in Gaza. But this is a very fragile thing, because the Hamas or the Jihad can veto it. By a very simple thing. Not by shelling Kassams on Shederot, which has a nuisance value. One was killed in Shederot after all these years, it's not pleasant to be there. It has a nuisance value. But if they will introduce Kassams to the West Bank, and shell two Kassams on Ben Gurion airport, that's a declaration of war. That will be an escalation. This is not a fantasy. It is something that can happen tomorrow. So, the issue is that the situation is so fragile that all you need are two cells, and two Kassams to blow up the situation. So, I am not saying that there is anything that is now going to happen that can secure the situation. The situation is very fragile. The future is very uncertain. What I don't buy is the idea that the situation is intractable. Namely, that something so strong determines the situation that there is nothing to do.

So, I didn't talk about another element and that's the solidarity between Israel and the Jews in the Diaspora, but since I talked for so long, I'll stop now. Thank you.

PASQUALE PASQUINO:

I would like to make a short remark. As I told you, I don't know virtually anything about Israeli politics, but I studied European civil wars for quite a long time, religious civil wars in the 16th and 17th centuries. And as you know, there were three solutions to these tragedies. One, applied in Southern Europe, was the preemptive strike – to speak like the Bush administration – by the church in Italy and Spain, to kill *in ovo* any religious dissent. We killed many people, so we did not need civil war to kill religious dissenters, because they were killed before. But where the Catholic Church was unable to avoid the development of what it called heresies, there were two solutions: one, which is impossible for our culture today, was to establish absolutism. In France, notably, the absolute king was able to impose toleration through the army, and through a sort of police state. Catholics were obliged, for a while, to tolerate Protestants. The other solution, as you know, was the German one, the partition of the country among Catholics and Protestants, according to the principle, *cuius regio, eius religio*. So the idea was that, to avoid religious civil war, you needed a common border, a border you could protect. You cannot protect people, especially if you don't have the power of the king of France inside Germany. But if you have a clear-cut border and a frontier, you may be able to protect your people and establish peace. So, I'm saying that I tend to believe that the wall may be a solution, a partial solution, to the conflict. What the theorists of the religious civil war, notably Thomas Hobbes, realized is that religious civil war cannot be the object of compromise. Compromise is possible in the society that Aristotle was describing, where there are rich and poor, because then the rich give a little bit of money, the poor accept that, and there is a compromise. But when the question is about identity, truth, religion, compromise is impossible. So you have to find other strategies. But at least Europeans have an experience of these alternative strategies. So that's what I wanted to add.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

There is one thing that happened in Europe, that hasn't happened yet in the Middle East. After the religious wars in Europe, people got tired. Tolerance came because there was not enough energy for free-floating hatred. People simply got tired. And they are not tired enough in the Middle East. They are tired, but not enough. There is still energy. That's the basic difference.

AMOS ELON

The trouble is, you can't afford a thirty-year war.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

Sure, you can't even afford a three-year war

EDNA ULLMANN-MARGALIT:

Well, we had a thirty-year war. It's the next thirty years.

AMOS ELON:

It's not the next thirty years, because there is not going to be a thirty-year war, there is going to be a 2-second war, which is going to extinguish all of life, that's the difference. The stakes are much higher than they ever were in Europe. The Germans

could afford to fight for thirty years, and leave behind a ruined, shattered country, a miserable country at the end of the Thirty Years' War. But in another generation, you revive. You don't have this opportunity here.

GIORGIO GOMEL:

Your exposé, Avishai, was very interesting, and I think, in a sense, we are caught between the radical pessimism of Amos and your more measured pessimism, which is not an easy situation in which to be a discussant. I'll make some scattered comments, because you touched on many topics. First, on the future of Israel. For us, concerned Jews in the Diaspora, the sources of concern for Israel are of two kinds. We still think of Israel as a haven from persecutions, from anti-Semitism. We are not in Ethiopia or Russia, but still. The idea that there might be a resurgence of anti-Semitism, and that you have a country where you can go is still a powerful symbolic and factual element in Jewish identity. The other thing is obviously the idea of self-determination, which is basic to Zionism, i.e. the idea that there should be a place where Jews can determine themselves, be a majority, and be the masters of their destiny. These are the two basic sources of concern for a Jew like me and I guess a large majority of Jews in the Diaspora, in Europe or in America would share this view.

So when we think about the future of Israel – and we are obviously very concerned about the future of Israel – we have three major worries. One is the *intifada*, with the permanent angst from suicide terror, the non-normality of living in such circumstances. We hear about emigration from Israel. It's often the upper class, the youngsters that go to New York. They could even come to Europe if we were not so restrictive on immigration. The fear is one of Israelis leaving the country, because they cannot sustain the tremendous costs of the violence, of the abnormality of living in such a situation. The statistics in Israel now say that there is a stock of 575,000 Israelis abroad, which is 10% of the Jewish population of the country. I don't know if the numbers are right, if they are to be believed. 10% of the Jewish Israeli population abroad is as if there were 5 million Italians that have left the country and live abroad. It is not a small number.

The other concern is what will be the political, constitutional structure of the state. Will the state remain more or less as it is today, a state of the Jews with a Jewish majority and an Arab minority? Or the demography in the country – never mind now the Palestinians, let's suppose that we have a two-state solution, and Israel more or less goes back to the boundaries of 1967 - but the internal demography of the state, i.e. the fact that the ultra-orthodox become an increasing part of the population, will change profoundly the fabric of the state? Will we move towards a Jewish state in the sense of a confessional state, in which the power of religion is stronger than it is today? Rather than a state of the Jews, will we move towards a Jewish state in this sense? Or maybe, which is just the opposite end of the spectrum, we will move – I don't know, in 50 years - towards a state for all its citizens. In fact, one can make an opposite prediction. One can think that Israel is becoming a multicultural, multiethnic society. People, I mean non-Jews, are immigrating to Israel. And then you have a challenge that comes from the fact the society is turning multicultural and the pressure will be for moving into a very different system, which is a post-Zionist state for all its citizens.

Now, the third concern is the fear of the fragmentation of Israeli society, internally, socially; this is a very interesting aspect that is not usually discussed in Europe

or outside Israel, and people are often unaware of it. You depicted a situation in which there is an underclass in Israel. It is outside globalization, outside the global economy. And there is a section of the society that is affluent and globalizing. This makes the Israel country dualistic and very unequal in terms of the distribution of income. If you look at World Bank statistics that are comparable internationally, Israel is now a very unequal society. It has turned very unequal over a span of about 20 years. And you made a very interesting point: you said this underclass, whether it is the *mizrahim*, the ultra-orthodox or the Arabs, does not see concrete benefits coming from peace. They see peace as something that is outside their domain. You used the expression, "it is the peace of the rich." I'm afraid that this has been a failure of the Israeli left. How do you convince people from that part of society, which is growing demographically, that peace will have tangible benefits, economically and socially? That if you divest money from the settlements and the army and war, and you invest that money into development towns and the welfare state, there might be benefits to the poor? So you would have a constituency of the *mizrahim* and the Arabs and the ultra-orthodox in favor of a peaceful settlement. And these are people who vote. They would vote for Labor, maybe not Meretz, obviously, but at least for Labor, instead of Shas or Likud.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

May I intervene with just an example? A week or two after the agreement with Jordan, one of the staunchest supporters of Labor and Rabin, Dov Lautmann, took his textile factory from a developmental town in Israel and moved it to Jordan. This happened a week or two later, it was one of the first things that happened. Now this is very clear. If peace means that the factory moves to Jordan, left or no, that's very hard to persuade. And he is a staunch supporter, he was one of the prime movers in supporting... That's the kind of thing that you have to worry about.

GIORGIO GOMEL:

There's even more than that, in a sense, in this kind of perception. If there is peace and normalcy and integration, the true underclass is the Palestinians. Until a few years ago, hundreds of Palestinians would come to Israel every day to be the labor force. Now, you have removed the Palestinians, but you still have the Arabs and the foreign workers, the *Gastarbeiter*. But if peace comes, with separation between the two peoples, the fear of the Israeli Jewish underclass is "ok, no more Palestinians, no more Arabs." And you, who are a *mizrahi* Jew from Iraq or Egypt, you are again turned into the underclass, 50 years after you or your family migrated to Israel. This may be a little extreme, a little paradoxical, but there is this kind of fear: that peace will be contrary to your social and economic interests. I agree with most of the other things that you said, so I'm not going to comment.

Maybe just one point: you described three categories of conflict. One is communal strife, second is the normal conflict between states, and third is religious warfare. And you said that the "best" thing would be for the conflict to be a conflict between normal states. So far it has been a communal strife. We fear that it may degenerate into religious warfare. Let's try to contain it into a normal conflict between states. To do that, a two-state solution, recognizing your partner, having an embryonic Palestinian state, and moving to a situation in which you have a relationship between two

states is very crucial. And there, I agree very much with you. And I also agree that there is little time to achieve that.

Maybe one question, an easy one for a discussant, but on a very difficult topic. You said, "I believe 70% of the public opinion in both camps understands that this is a necessity." It is not their dream, but they understand the necessity of this compromise. How can you turn these feelings of large majorities into political majorities? Can you say something more about this? We touched on this yesterday, but if you have some ideas on what Palestinians and Israelis can do to turn these feelings into political majorities, that would be a very interesting thing for us to hear.

EDNA ULLMANN MARGALIT:

I want to start with my personal sense of the present crisis, the feeling that we are now at a watershed in this conflict. I was born into the state, and lived through the conflict all my life. Of course, there were always dramatic points in the conflict, and there were wars and difficult times, and we lived through all of them. I think it's true to say of myself and of many of my friends, who are broadly on the left, that for years and years now we knew what the solution was going to be and should be – the two state solution. Many years ago, soon after the Six Day War, not so many people thought about this solution, or believed that this was the right solution.

Over the years this became more or less common sense. One of the paradoxes of Israeli public life is that, in many ways, while the country has moved to the right, general views have moved very much to the left. Thirty years ago, this idea of some compromise on Jerusalem, some division, some shared sovereignty and a two-state solution, was promoted by only a very small section of Israeli political life on the left. And those of us who are Israelis remember the succession of small parties on the left. Some of these parties disappeared, some of them merged and still exist in some form or another in the Israeli political arena. They were very marginal, but the vision of those marginal parties has become now part of the general wisdom, more or less. On the other hand, the country has moved very much to the right. So there is a paradox there.

Anyway, the point I am trying to make is that for many years it was very clear to me and to people like me that there was going to be a two-state solution with a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel. The only question was how many more wars were still on the way; how much more blood must be spilled before we get there. And it was clear to people like us that all the time and blood and money that was spent was wasted, because it was so clear what the solution was going to be. Why waste all this time and blood and money? So we were trying to make things happen sooner. But the sense was that, even if it doesn't happen sooner, it will happen later. So, whether sooner or later, there was almost a sense of inevitability.

I think that the present sense of crisis comes from the new recognition that there is no inevitability here. Nothing is inevitable. It may not happen. This is my own sense of personal crisis, and I think that I am not alone in this. And I am trying to think, when did this happen? Why did this happen? How come the solution suddenly does not look inevitable? It does not now look as if history and politics are going that way, and that the only question is when will it happen and how much more blood on the way. And if this solution is not inevitable, then what? If not two states side by side, what is the alternative? The alternatives were already mentioned around this table. One is the useless

vision that some people have, of a single, bi-national state. I don't even want to discuss it. I just want to mention that this old idea burst into the American Jewish public consciousness about a year or two ago when some articles were written in this vein, and suddenly some people liked this idea, and some Palestinians want to promote it. The other alternative is this horror, this nightmare vision of the apartheid state that Avishai talked a little bit about. In a way, this is already the reality. We don't want to look this reality in the face. But once it is established and acknowledged that this is going to be the future, then there is no future. This is the end of the state of Israel as we know it, and of the Zionist vision – at least the positive parts of the Zionist vision that we grew up on. It is really the dream that burst, or the God that failed, and I do not see in this kind of country a future for myself. This may not be interesting; but what is interesting is whether there will be a future in this country for my children, and for the children of all of us. This is a highly problematic topic to ponder.

So how did it happen that suddenly the two-state solution lost its inevitability? It happened sometime during this *intifada* for sure, but it is not the *intifada* as such. I want to trace one kind of development that happened. This is my own interpretation; I am not sure how many people share this interpretation of the way events happened. Towards the end of Barak's tenure, and during the *intifada*, the idea of separation became a mantra. Barak ran his election campaign on this idea of separation between the Israelis and Palestinians. His campaign failed, but the idea had a very strong hold on the Israeli public. People may not want to talk about two states, but they do want to talk about separation between Israelis and Palestinians. Barak ran on a very simplistic kind of mantra or motto that said, "We shall be here, and they will be there". Now the appeal of the idea that while we do not talk about states there will still be some division – the idea that "they will be there" – was that we shall not see "them". They will not come to terrorize us. We shall not give them work. They will not have jobs among us. They will be "there". We had enough with them. So, in a way, people who always opposed the idea of a Palestinian political entity, because it sounded like giving them something good or giving them a prize, were suddenly in favor of this idea of separation. This idea was not put in terms of a state, it was put in terms of, "let them go away; let them be invisible to us." This became a very powerful idea, and gained a very strong hold on the Israeli public. And its translation into practical terms was the wall.

Now I come to Pasquale's concern with partition and walls and borders: the separation mantra became translated into the horrible, monstrous idea of a wall. And this idea did not come from the right, it came from the left. It came from people like Barak and Ramon and Mitzna. They wanted the wall. The wall will separate, and everything will be fine. We shall not see them. The wall would be very high, as you know from the photographs. (By the way, the wall is not like that for all its hundreds of kilometers. It is like that in cities and in population centers. It is tall. It really separates. You don't see the other side). The right did not like this idea. The left pushed it. Soon it became clear that there was a majority in favor of it, because people put all sorts of hopes in this wall. It will stop terrorism. It will bring us back to ourselves. And then the right – Sharon – decided to adopt this idea, because they saw what a popular swell of support there was. This was the only topic on the political agenda about two years ago. And they started building the wall.

So, a few things became clear. One, the left quickly realized that when they had talked about the wall they had a very different vision of what it should be like from the wall that the right – which by now was in power – had started to implement. The issue became the route. Where does the wall go? So, one thing that became clear to the left was that they were not going to get their wall. They were going to get the wall of the right wing, the wall of Sharon. But the more important thing that began to be clear is that this wall is impracticable. That it cannot work. And I think that this is the main thing. It took a while to penetrate.

The wall was built very quickly in some parts. It was already there. It cost hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars to do it but the money was there. And it began to dawn on people that it doesn't work. It doesn't work for a variety of reasons. The cost in terms of the disruption of the lives of Palestinians became such that even people who are not leftists but are simply decent began to have doubts. But that was not the main thing. The main thing was the problem of the settlements. Whichever monstrous way the right tried to plan the route of the wall, many settlements and many settlers still remained on the other side. There was no way to avoid this simple fact. I think that it was then that the problem of the settlements and the reality of Israeli policies of almost 40 years of settling the West Bank could no longer be avoided or denied. (Amos Elon described the consequences of these policies yesterday as disastrous, and I agree with him on that.) It became clear that this is a reality that has to be faced.

And a few things happened when this reality began to be faced. The settlers realized that this was their moment of reckoning, and that if they don't make their point now, they will lose their chance. Parts of the Israeli youth decided that they could no longer serve in an army that is doing these kinds of things. So the question of refusal to serve and civil disobedience became an issue. And now this issue becomes even more prominent because now we have civil disobedience on the right as well. When evacuating settlements becomes an issue, like in Gaza, then the right wing soldiers do not want to participate in evacuation. So we have refusal to serve in the army and civil disobedience on both the right and the left, and it is an issue. Also, civil lawsuits against bits of the wall started to be brought, on human rights grounds.

This brings me to a second topic that I want to talk about: the crisis of legitimacy. This in my view is yet another arena of crisis in Israel right now. Let me just mention a biographical point: for a number of years I was Chair the association for civil rights in Israel. This is my other, non-academic hat. And so I have been trained, in the last 10 years or so, to look at the conflict partly through the lens of the law and the courts and civil rights. I think that right now this is an aspect of the conflict that is important. It is very much on the table, it is part of public life now and it has to be considered when we think about the future of Israel or the future of Israeli democracy. So let me make just a few points: this is not a real presentation, just a number of dots that need to be connected in one way or another.

I shall start with the wall, the Supreme Court and the lawsuits. This is a very interesting development that happened in the last year or so. It is surprising that we do not hear so much about the wall in the last year – I mean, this was after all the hugest thing until about a year ago. I haven't been in Israel in the past few months and am not sure what the reality there is, whether they continued building it or sort of suspended it.

In any case it is not part of the public discussion the way it was a year ago. Part of it has to do with the success of a few quite spectacular lawsuits against bits of the wall that were the harshest in terms of their impact on the life of Palestinians. There was one spectacular success in connection with a certain part of the wall near Jerusalem, in the area of Mevasseret Zion. It was a very interesting case in which middle-class Israeli Jews, who live in this suburb of Jerusalem, decided that they could not go along with the disruption of normal life to their Palestinian neighbors. They decided that they were going to bring this lawsuit against the wall: and not let the Arabs do it but let the Israelis do it. And therefore it was a successful, and a really interesting victory. And there were several others.

When I say ‘spectacular’ and ‘victory’ – these are dramatic terms – I need to give one word of background. The Israeli Supreme Court is known to be quite a liberal court. It is known to be one of the only organs of the Israeli polity in the past decades which consistently promotes liberal values and the vision of Israel as a liberal democracy, where the reality is not quite so clear. The reality is that Israel is not a very liberal country in its gut instincts. But the Supreme Court tries to preserve and promote this vision, and this arouses opposition on the part of many segments of Israeli society who don’t go along with the secular liberal vision of the Supreme Court – the ultra-orthodox, the orthodox oriental Jewish community, and others. They have deep resentments and suspicions against the Supreme Court that are in a way understandable. This is one area where Israeli democracy right now is extremely threatened and extremely fragile. Because the Supreme Court is a main organ, when its legitimacy is undermined it is not clear what the future of Israeli democracy will be.

Now the Israeli Supreme Court, while it has quite consistently presented or maintained this liberal vision, has not been very liberal across the Green Line. It is a constant accusation against the Israeli Supreme Court that democracy, as far as they are concerned, stops at the Green Line. And whenever there are lawsuits that have to do, for example, with demolition of houses on the West Bank and other violations of human rights, the Israeli Supreme Court defers to security considerations and to the army. So liberalism and human rights are upheld within the Green Line whereas beyond the Green Line this is questionable. The lawsuits that had to do with the wall have been the one area where things were different. They did not exactly deal with the West Bank as such, but they clearly touched issues that are central to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict – and in those particular cases the Supreme Court ruled against the government-proposed route of the wall. So the route of the wall had to be changed. This is extremely costly, and the government was extremely embarrassed and not only was it embarrassed because of what they had to change, but they had to rethink the whole route and the whole concept. It seems to me that the pressures are growing to move the wall more and more towards the Green Line. If it is on the Green Line I still do not particularly like it, but I won’t object to it.

And the left will not object to it. The left actually wants it. They want the separation and they want it to be more or less on the Green Line: this has always been the vision of two states. The two-state solution meant, more or less, the Green Line as the border. So now there is a very interesting kind of development on the ground that started with the vision of separation. The vision of separation first gained momentum and became very intrusive into the West Bank. But now it seems as if the idea, while still

there, the wall that symbolizes the separation is gradually being pushed towards the Green Line. If so, it leaves unresolved the question of the settlements and of the settlers. This is the locus of the current threat to the courts, to the legitimacy of the state, and to Israeli democracy. I do believe that the issue of settlers and settlements is central now. Here I take a position somewhere between Minerbi and Gomel, who argued about this point. I do see the problem of the settlement and the settlers as a very severe one in terms of a threat to the legitimacy and to the democracy of the state.

So, as I mentioned, there is now civil disobedience on the left and on the right, and I also mentioned the lawsuits that had to do with the wall. One more point has to do with the law and the settlers. The settlers, in their desperation, tried to take the legal avenue, and to argue that the plans to evacuate them are illegal in terms of international law, because this is a forced or imposed transfer. Throughout the years the left worked to de-legitimize the idea of transfer, given the fear that one of the plans of a right wing government might be to transfer the Israeli Arabs across the Jordan. This never happened, but the danger is felt to be always there. So for 30 years the left has worked hard to de-legitimize the notion of transfer. Now the settlers come and capitalize on that. They say, you are against transfer, but this is what you want to do to us. And they actually presented the case that this is against the Geneva Conventions, because there is an article there that talks about the forced transfer of whole populations against their will, en masse.

Now there is something very interesting here. They are right that there is this article in the Geneva Conventions. However, there is a caveat to this article, and the caveat says that the transfer is illegal only when the population was there legally to begin with. And of course the question is whether the settlers were in the territories legally to begin with. It is very clear that if they want to resort to international law they cannot have it both ways. If they want to argue that their civil or human rights should be protected because of the Geneva Convention, then the very same Geneva Convention says that they were not allowed to be there in the first place. This is very simple.

But the Israeli government is caught in a kind of fix now, because the Israeli governments have never quite agreed that the Geneva Convention applies to the Occupied Territories. They didn't quite accept the interpretation that the Geneva Convention applies there. They tried to argue for the legality of those settlements – but if they are legal, then the transfer is illegal. So there is a trap here as to where international law stands and as to where the Israeli government stands *vis à vis* international law. My sense of it is that it is a bit like what happens in the US: in their attempt to justify disregarding the Geneva conventions, Bush and Ashcroft and the others recently used the word “quaint” to describe them as they apply to the conduct of the US in Afghanistan and in Iraq with regard to prisoners of wars. “They are quaint. We don't need to bother with them,” they were saying. This comes back to haunt the Americans, and this is even more true for Israel. It is not going to work in either case. Disregarding international law and conventions cannot work in the long run. There is no way that the Israeli government can get away with it. And this will definitely not work for the settlers. But I think that the fact that they now tried to use international law to make their case is a sign of their desperation.

The last point here is the way that Sharon now very delicately tries to balance legitimacy and legality. He is trying to push for his vision of evacuating Gaza even when it is not clear that he has a majority in his government. When he knew he had no majority he did something very drastic. He fired some ministers, so that the vote would come out as he wanted it to come out. It was not clear that the disengagement plan would have a majority in the Knesset. It actually passed last week, but it passed with 58 to 56 – a very slight majority of only two. And in any case this is less than the 60 (or 61) which is the real majority in the Knesset. So he has to maneuver on a very, very thin line of what is acceptable in terms of parliamentary democracy. Does he have a majority for his policy or doesn't he? There is a very thin line there. Even people on the left, when they support a particular policy of his, they fidget, because it is not clear whether he is still within the legitimate boundary or not. On the other hand, there are these opinion-polls figures that Avishai mentioned, and others too, that indicate quite clearly that in the general population – on both sides – there is a majority for a two-state solution, for negotiations, for some kind of compromise. Except that this majority does not find its way into political representation. I am here just drawing attention to this as yet another interesting issue of democracy, representation, legitimacy and legality: how are we to work out these problems, which are at the heart of the question of the future of Israeli democracy.

Thank you.

SERGIO MINERBI:

I am very proud that Israeli democracy, although there are doubts about it, is producing people like Edna. It's a beautiful thing, to criticize everything, from every point of view, it's a wonderful intellectual exercise. It's an exercise in futility, because, whatever you say, you can always find a reason to criticize. And I found a lack of vision. I find a tired person. And I find somebody who is seeing only the rights of the other side and never our own rights. And mainly, I found an idea, which is one thing and its contrary at the same time. Why? I thought that people would be pessimistic this morning, reading today's newspaper, that yesterday, in the Karni transit post, a Palestinian suicide bomber, or some Palestinian bombers, provoked 6 dead people and 10 wounded. I thought, this is a provocation, first of all, against Abu Mazen. And, I thought, this is a special provocation, since it has been claimed by the martyrs of Al-Aqsa, which means the Fatah, the party of Abu Mazen. So, if Abu Mazen is not capable (and I give him the credit of being willing, because he could be not even willing – but let's suppose he is willing, but not capable of exercising any discipline of his own people, in his own party), what's the purpose of going on and discussing with him? Who is he? How far can he deliver the goods? He can make promises again and again that won't be respected. And this is a real cause of deep pessimism, no doubt, for everyone who hopes for peace, and for everyone who hopes that the moderate Abu Mazen would be the man of the future. But to be the man of the future, he must also do something in his own camp, to bring order first of all to his own people. If this does not happen, there is no point whatsoever in discussing the fine legal points of the Geneva Conventions. I mean, where is the Geneva Convention here? There is no Geneva Convention for terrorism. Yes, it's true that a regular state like the state of Israel must abide by international law, no doubt. And the High Court of Justice – as far as I understand, I am not very learned in legal problems – has done whatever was possible in a situation, in which the army can claim, with a solid

basis in truth, that it is imperative to safeguard, first of all, security. Because first you have to live, *deinde philosophare*, this was known already at the time of the Romans. And it's wonderful and beautiful to have ideals, to respect rights, but first of all, security must be present.

Then I found no dynamic vision. Everything is static. Also in your speech. Nothing is moving. Everything is as it was. My idea is slightly different. It is true that globalization is a big problem. It is an even bigger problem for Europe. That does not make things easier for us. But we see today in Europe the tremendous effect of globalization, when relocation of factories to China is speeding up. And it is true that Dov Lautman brought his factory to Jordan, but it is also true that factories are going to Hungary from Atarot because of terrorist activity. When a Palestinian who was working for 8 years at a plant in Atarot killed the Jewish manager of the plant, the factory was moved to Hungary the next week. And 25 Palestinians didn't have a place of work any more. To see only one side of the coin may be a wonderful exercise, but it's not very productive.

Now the left has one big problem. They want to have their cake and eat it too. Either you have one state in which the Palestinians will be represented according to their weight in the population, or you have this bi-national state, which means, for all intents and purposes, the end of the Jewish state. Which is a beautiful idea. And I beg to differ. You may dream about it, but I don't buy it.

The Palestinians come to work in Israel, to have whatever services they need in Israel, and then spit in our face and kill our people. This is not possible. Either/or. But this is exactly the situation. Because even with the Israeli Arabs, it's not exactly as you described. For instance – I am sorry to speak about such trivial things as football – but Bnai Sakhnin won 2-0 against the Betar Yerushalayim last week. This should be big news on the first page of the newspapers. Because it means a lot about the relations between Betar Yerushalayim, who are terrible people, and Bnai Sakhnin, and I think this is very good start for something different.

[From the public: Can you explain?]

No problem. Bnai Sakhnin is a football team made up of Israeli Arabs of Galilee. There are Jews as well. As there are Arab players on Jewish teams. You don't have to be Italian to understand the links between soccer and politics, but if you are Italian, you can understand it even better. So, this happened. This, to my eyes, is a small but important step forward.

Now, I think that globalization has many sides. You cannot just say that globalization is depriving people of work. The government should intervene in providing vocational training, and should plan ahead to give a new trade to people who have lost their jobs to globalization. But globalization is something that you cannot avoid. It is part and parcel of a market economy. This is a system that everyone, even on the left, has accepted. Inequality is the first consequence of a market economy. There is no doubt a growing inequality in Israel. The welfare state is disappearing. And we must prepare people to cope with the new situation. It is not true that it is the poor who fear peace. Who was killed on two busses in Beersheba, if not poor people? The rich people go in their cars; the poor take busses. The poor understand that if there is no peace they can

explode in a bus tomorrow morning. If there is peace, there is a hope that this will end, except if terrorism goes on.

This brings us back to terrorism. There is no doubt that the military budget should be sharply reduced. And I hope this is slowly coming to the conscience of many people. But time is necessary for ideas to percolate. And the credibility of the other side must be proven, without which it is difficult to make concessions. With credibility, a lot can be done. So my view is that there is a bright future for the state of Israel. But perhaps not for all its citizens. Perhaps some will have to go to the United States. Not so much for economic reasons, but because of their mood or for psychological reasons. But, whoever believes in this state can make a contribution to make it better organized and with more social equality. And you cannot have solidarity inside without social equality. So, my humble opinion is that to be tired is a transitory mood, it is not a political position. Thank you.

ENRICO MOLINARO:

I finished a Ph.D at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on the holy places in the Middle East peace agreements, and currently I am teaching in the Ph.D program in political theory at the LUISS with Professor Maffettone. I think we can all grant the importance of security for any future attempt at peace. And I think we can all agree about the importance of soccer in the shaping of identity. It is not by chance that Great Britain doesn't have a national team, while there is England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland-Ulster. That's why I would like to go back to the remarks of Professor Pasquino about the Thirty Years' War. Why? Because Western European history is absolutely relevant in understanding the Arab-Israeli conflict. But we have to consider both aspects. The religious wars, which is one possible interpretation of the conflict. And this is an interpretation that started with the British intervention during the Mandate Period, when they set up the Jerusalem Committee, but invited only religious leaders to sit on the Committee, like Chief Rabbis, the Christian Patriarchs and the Muslim Mufti, and they did not invite the Zionist executive movement leaders or the Palestine executive movement leaders. On the other hand, you have the Westphalian model. Is it true? It is true that, at the end of the Thirty Years' War, you have the importance of the boundary, whether it is shaped by the wall, by a fence, or simply as a legal, political line. So these are probably the two modern models of identity that shaped Western history in sort of cycles. We had the Cold War, where you have communism and capitalism, which are, by definition, non-territorial, because they are global models of identity. And then after the fall of the Berlin Wall, you have nationalism, the reunification of Germany, the division Czechoslovakia and the breaking off of republics of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. And you have Oslo, which is shaped on the interpretation of the conflict as a national conflict – two people, two states.

And then you have September 11, and new models having nothing to do with territory. Islam and the West – these are the two new models, and according to the interpretation of Huntington, we should talk in terms of civilizations and the clash of civilizations. And civilizations, by definition, don't have a physical boundary. And so, again, we hear interpretation of the conflict in terms of Jews, Muslims and Christians, and not any more Palestinians and Israelis. This is probably a way to understand the conflict. The model of identity is no longer the *millet* of the Ottoman Empire, that

somehow draws a line, since the Roman Empire *natio*, that was not a nation but an ethnic cultural identity didn't have a physical boundary, but was still connected to a local identity. We all know that the Arab – Israeli conflict in modern times started after the European influence. First we had Napoleon shaping the national state identity, and then the British doing the opposite job, shaping global religious identity. So probably, in order to understand the future, we should understand, what is the influence of the West? In positive and negative terms. And then the meaning of the fence (or the wall – because as it was already said, this is only 3.5% of the separation fence, the concrete wall, maybe few people in Europe know that this wall is only a very small part – as was said correctly – in the populated areas. So the meaning of the separation – we are here and they are they) lies in what kind of identity should come out of the peace process. A national identity with a physical boundary? Or a global identity, shaped in terms of civilization, religion, or whatever new idea has come up in the intellectual mind of the neo-cons to destroy the idea of the state in the traditional European sense. We can go back to the debate between Rumsfeld – he spoke of the old Europe – and Prodi's response. He said: this is old, but it is also wise. I believe this is a way to interpret the conflict, and an attempt to understand what could be the future influence of continental European understanding, in interpreting the conflict and developing a new line, that will develop all over...and back to the West. Or a new Anglo-Saxon way that doesn't want to see the conflict as between two people and two states, but rather between religions. And in this sense, we can understand this big debate about Islam, radical Islam, bin-Laden, without forgetting how the Wahabi family in Saudi Arabia developed, and how some radical Islamic trends are also funded and helped by Western sources. Thank you.

Member of the public:

Until two weeks ago I belonged to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel. I retired, and am here because Enrico invited me. To speak about the future of Israel. I don't know what the future of Italy could have been in 1944. It could have gone to Communism. It could have gone to anarchy. I am very worried, as a citizen and not as a former diplomat, by 2005. I see that the Palestinians and the Israelis alike have seen nothing yet. For two reasons. One, because of Sharon's plan for disengagement from Gaza, and with the Palestinians, because of the death Arafat. I think that 2005 will be the moment of truth. The settlers have understood what is at stake with Sharon's plan, and they will do whatever they can to prevent the implementation of that plan. And I am worried. I don't want to speak about civil war, because in Europe, when we speak about civil war, we are reminded of Spain, or even the Thirty Years' War. But we are going through some kind of bloodshed. I hope it will stop. You should look at Israeli women settlers going to demonstrations with their babies. Because these babies are a ledger of life. And when the real fight will start on Gaza, there will definitely be bloodshed. I am even more worried about the fact that among the settlers, there will be somebody who will try (and there was an article in Ha'aretz three weeks ago, but everybody in the press in Israel speaks about it) to attack the mosques on the temple mount, and nobody could prevent it. A Kassam from Hebrew University, from Mt. Scopus. Because the settlers have understood that 2005 is the year. The same is true of the Palestinians. Abu Mazen will have to disarm the Hamas and the Jihad. He will have no other choice. It will be imposed on him by the Americans, by a fact of life. If we succeed in having these two

events – the plan of Sharon and Abu Mazen disarms the terrorists – then I think there will be a great hope. Because the two populations are not only tired, but exhausted. And there are so many antagonistic – positive and negative - elements in Palestinian and Israeli society. For a Palestinian woman, a Palestinian journalist, the reference is Tel Aviv, where there is a free press and freedom of expression. You have so many antagonistic elements, that optimism is an option.

We are now witnessing a government with Shimon Peres and Ariel Sharon. All my life since I have been in Israel – 44 years – I have always considered Shimon Peres and Ariel Sharon as the angels of death of Israeli politics. Because their own personal ambitions come first. Shimon Peres was the promoter of the settlements. In 1974, when Rabin was Prime Minister and he was Defense Minister, Sharon was not given the opportunity to be Prime Minister, so he decided to destroy the Likud from within. And he started in the 80's. Now these two men – the angels of death of Israeli politics – are now in power. And now we'll see what these two old men will do for us.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

First of all, since they are in power, they are not struggling anymore to become powerful, so the situation has changed. The same Shimon Peres who wanted to eliminate Rabin, no longer has the same ideas. That's number one. Number two, nobody noticed that the wall has brought about the end of the dream of a greater Israel. And this is a very important point.

The second point I wanted to make is about the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, which Abu Mazen has resuscitated. 100,000 Palestinians came back to Israel in the past 10 years. Silently, quietly, but it happened. And therefore, this point has already been taken care of. Another thing is, I am far away from the political ideas of Avigdor Lieberman, but he had a gimmick: he said to the Israeli Arabs living in Umm al-Fahm, "you stay where you are, but the whole the whole area passes to the Palestinian authorities," and immediately there were high cries. So, no matter how bad the situation of the Israeli Arabs is, they don't want to leave Israel, but they want to spit in the face of Israel. Thank you.

AMOS LUZZATTO:

I cannot teach you anything about your policies, my dear Israeli friends, but I want to learn something. First of all, not only the facts and the judgment about the facts, but something more. We Jews in the Diaspora have no direct influence. 25,000 Italian Jews have no real influence on Italian politics. But, in Europe, and we belong to Europe, perhaps we may have some small influence. Now the question is, what should we do in Europe and on the international plane, in order to do something that favors your process of peace and the solution of your problems. That's the only question for us, here in Europe. I must admit that, I understand nothing now, less than ever. The question I want to ask is, do you believe that the chief actors in the conflict are local actors – in which case we can do nothing? Or do you believe that they are not only local but international, in which case we might be able do something? You spoke of the political parties and political ideologies of Israel, as if the only actors in the conflict were there. We were confronted with the problem of the Italian position towards the Iraq War. Is it relevant to your problems? I believe it is. But I don't catch the real knots. I don't speak of the

Gordian knot. I should understand something about it. Otherwise what should we do? We are questioned by newspapers, magazine and politicians. For example, I had a meeting with someone from the Italian government, who tried to make me understand why Italian intervention in Iraq was necessary. I don't believe it. He believed it. Now does it have something to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? You might say that it doesn't. But I remember when Iraq had missiles against Israel for some months. I want to understand, in order to act politically in Europe, not only in Italy – I don't believe in Italy as such. In Europe! But after these two days, I understand nothing more than I did not understand yesterday. So please, help me to understand!

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

The way to understand your question is, is the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians a global conflict? Is this a conflict with global implications, in which global interventions can set the terms? What are repercussions of the Iraqi war? I think that a great deal depends on the two parties involved, the Palestinians and the Israelis. It's obviously a possibility for the U.S. to impose its solution. But it costs a great deal, and I don't see that it's happening. The coalition of the neo-conservatives with the Christian coalition can block such a thing if they think that Israel should pay too much of a price, according to their understanding. I think that politically in the U.S. now they can block an imposed solution against the wishes of Israel. If both sides ask for external pressure, that's a different issue. But if it's an imposed solution, in the way Eisenhower forced Israel to roll back from Sinai, I don't see it now as a viable option.

As to Europe, it's even more remote. It's true that most of Israel's trade is with Europe. But I don't see Europe forcing Israel to do anything. They can make things miserable for Israelis, making it a pariah state, making Israeli tourists feel unwelcome. I don't think they will come to ostracizing Israel like South Africa. So, I don't see the two major powers, the U.S. first and foremost and then Europe, getting involved in a serious way, unless things get out of hand. And I'll tell you what I mean in a moment. So the initiative should come from within the area, and then gain the help of Europe and the Americans. An imposed solution, by the Americans, by the quartet, doesn't seem terribly realistic, politically.

Now, there is no question in my mind that the mess in Iraq complicated things endlessly. If the Americans stay there it will be a disaster. If they run away it will be a disaster. For different reasons, but in both accounts it will be a disaster. Bush has to prove that something is happening, that's why they welcome the Palestinian elections so much. So it didn't go that well in Iraq, but at least in Palestine it was seen a process of democratization. What role can we play as concerned Jews in Europe, concerned about Israel and concerned about Europe? There are two issues. Yesterday we heard about the corruption in the Palestinian Authority. Of course there is corruption, no worse than in Moldavia or the Ukraine, this is nothing unique. The point is, Palestine lives on 3-4 billion dollars a year. That's the GNP and Gomel may correct me, but it's more or less that. 1/3 of it – and at a certain point in the *intifada*, 1/2 of it – came from abroad, including Israel, but mainly from Europe. That's a substantial thing. So, the Europeans have more of a say in how the Palestinians run their affairs than in how the Israelis do. They have something to say about Palestine, both economically and politically. Secondly, Palestinians feel that Europe is their best protection *vis à vis* the U.S. Europe plays a role,

but no one plays a decisive role. The ultimate initiative for a solution should come from the two protagonists. I wish there were something from the outside, but politically, realistically, I don't see it coming. There is a role for Europe to play, and I think the Jewish community in Europe will emerge as a third community, along with Israel and the U.S. And by now it's not only Western Europe but all of Europe, some 2 million persons. I think, yes, you can play a role, knowing the constraints. The constraints are first, the priority comes from the inter-communal strife, which is the power of the weak. The powers are so weak, they behave differently from states and it's hard to exert pressure on weak societies. Europe and America can more easily affect states – even strong states – than they can affect communities, as in Ireland or other places. You have a moderate, but significant, role to play, if you play it right.

PASQUALE PASQUINO:

I want to make a short remark about what Mr. Minerbi was saying. In the land of Israel and Palestine there has been - in different forms in the last 60 years - a sort of ongoing war. An ongoing war which is essentially the responsibility of Europe. We kicked the Jews out of Europe, they pushed the Palestinians, and it's perfectly normal that this produces a sort of war. This is the background. In this war, personally, I will always be with the Jews. My second preference is that Israel will be a democratic society, and not an apartheid state. What I have learned, listening to all of you, is that things are unfortunately unclear. Probably 2005 may be even more important than the last few years. I tend to believe that a democratic Israel is possible only through partition. But, Edna may be right that there will be an unhappy sort of partition. South Africa also had partitions. It may be that there will not be two states, but a sort of enclave, and this is not a good future for Israel. Israel, Jews are part of European civilization, the best part of my civilization, so I would not be very happy to see this development. I think this question is slightly more complex than Mr. Minerbi was presenting.

GADI GOLAN:

From 1988-1990, I was at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of the Italian and French desk. At that time, Andreotti was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy. During these two years, he came to Israel 3-4 times. In Israel, the Prime Minister was Yizhak Shamir, a man from Likud. These two men got along very well. I think Andreotti was the only European leader that Shamir could trust so well. There was a chemistry between them. One of Andreotti's advisors told me that Andreotti had a plan, that Italy and hopefully Europe would support the entrance of Israel into the European Union, and Israel would accept the creation of a Palestinian state; by the fact that Israel becomes part of the European Union, its security is ensured. Now, I don't know today, if it's still a solution. Today, it would mean that you have to accept the Palestinians as well, and you have enough of a problem with Turkey. One of the problems inside Israel is that you have the perception that Europe is against Israel. Not so much the politicians, but intellectuals. That's why, for many Israelis, the solution is the U.S., and I am sorry about that. There should be much more comprehension in Europe.

SERGIO MINERBI:

I am sorry. I have spent only 5 years in Brussels trying to understand Europe, and I was 100% in favor of it, even when inside Europe many people were still hesitating. Today, it looks a little too big to be true. And certainly too big to have one voice. In foreign policy – and Israel has experience in having a two-headed foreign policy – you must try to speak with one voice. Now Europe has proved since 1973 that it was absolutely ready to accept Arab pressures. In 1973, you had the oil embargo and Europe was in a panic. And the oil block was never efficient. And we have the statistics now from Rotterdam, oil was arriving. But when oil arrived in Genoa, the tankers were kept outside so that the Committee for Prices would raise the prices, and when it did, then the tanker came in. So Europe has proved, as one of the first big unities, to accept and abide by the pressures of the Arabs. And the Euro-Arab dialogue, whatever its importance, was created in Copenhagen in December '73 because of the oil pressure. Today we have seen oil jumping to almost \$50 a barrel. This hasn't been a big tragedy, but it's still a very important commodity. Europe has taken a stand against the war in Iraq. But the fact is that if Chirac is taking a stand against Iraq today, this has immediate repercussions on Euro-American relations, and now the French Foreign Minister is speaking about trying to have better relations with the U.S. This can only improve our situation. But, for the time being, I don't see it happening, but I hope it will happen.

I think the divorce between Israel and Europe is a tragedy, not only because of imports and exports, but for a million other reasons. I think that even if it were possible, we should not become a part of the EU. We should not appear to the Arabs as the spearhead of the West. We should be what we are. And even if Amos Elon doesn't like people from Arab countries, I do believe that we are going back to the East where we belong. We belong more to the East than to Europe. And therefore I believe that we should seek the best relationship possible with Europe, without being a member of the European Union. And it's better for everybody that every side should stay in his own house.

Now the problem is what can you do as Jews in Europe?

Yes there is a very important partner in Europe, the Catholic Church, which had a major role to play in defining the position of Chirac against the U.S. in Iraq. Three persons – the Pope, Renato Martino and Monsignor Touran – fabricated an anti-American and pro-Saddam Hussein policy. I think that today, inside the Catholic Church, a lot of cardinals think the contrary, that they should have a different Islamic policy than the one that the Pope has had for the last 25 years. Including in Africa when he visited the Sudan. They are far from a majority. Much more should be done by Israel to have better relations with Europe. But this is true only for relations between states. The real problem is relations with intellectual and cultural actors inside Europe, and for now, I don't see any easy solution to this. We have anti-Semitism in universities. We have seen quite a lot of pressure inside the universities to cut links, scientific cooperation with Israel. Yes, there are at least 300 scientific projects between Italy and Israel, and I hope this side will prevail and not the side which in Pisa would not allow an Israeli diplomat inside the university, or in Ca' Foscari, or in other universities. I hope that Europe will come closer to the United States, and this will have a positive consequence for Israel. Italy will do well anyway. So a task for European Judaism is not easy to delineate, but is possible

inside the European Parliament, inside the European Commission. You should have your say, and you should definitely have your Jewish agenda. Not only for the Day of Memory. Because we must be not only a people of yesterday, but also a people of tomorrow. And therefore, we should constantly present ideas and projects to the Europeans, and we have enough intellectuals of very high standing around this table, that can eventually provide you with good ideas.

CLOTILDE PONTECORVO:

I am not a political scientist, I am a psychologist, and I would like to address this question particularly to the Israelis around this table. It seems to me that, as Prof. Margalit said so well yesterday, Sharon can be the only one who can evacuate the Gaza Strip and this is probably a fact that produces effects. A very old Jewish concept: even if you are unsure about being able to produce particular consequences, you can always produce consequences. It seems that Sharon has invested much in this, and he has lost his traditional links. So what will this produce? He has involved Labor in this. What will be the consequences of this for the Likud, the right wing and religious parties? He can also produce consequences on the left that may not be all that positive. Because it's good from the point of view of the left to evacuate Gaza, but what is the consequence of the fact that they are in the same government? So what are the political consequences, given the popular support for evacuation? What about the leaders? Because it seems that the leaders are involved in something which seems to be higher than them.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

This issue is the short-term consequences and the long-run consequences. We are talking about a government whose term should officially end in 2006. So we are talking about 2 years. What can realistically be expected is the evacuation of the Gaza Strip. It will be immensely important if it doesn't happen. If it happens, the consequences are less clear. Now you are asking me in more detail, what can be the political repercussions for the political arrangements and structure of leadership inside Israel, and what's the political structure. There is a possibility, even in the next election, of a realignment of the forces, that won't necessarily mirror the current political structure. Usually in Israel there is tremendous inertia. But there is talk that people like Sharon, Olmert, some in the Likud and some people from Shin Nuiv, the centrist party, and some people from Labor, may create a centrist party. And then there will be hard-core opposition to any evacuation from the right. The left and parts of Labor and Meretz. And then the Arab parties. In the center this will be a form of government. I'll call it "the wall party," namely Israel beyond the wall. More or less the border will be the wall. The right will still advocate against evacuation. Then you'll have the centrist wall party. Then the people who are for an agreement along Geneva Agreement. This is not an impossibility. The question is, what are the prospects of the various parties, if Labor is in the government, how can they disassociate or differentiate themselves? I believe that if Sharon goes after two years, it will be open. I can even see Netanyahu, Barak. I don't think Sharon has a clear majority, even if he broke the mold of the party. What will happen after, it's unclear. It's problematic. Because when Netanyahu ran against Barak, the political system was different. You voted directly for the Prime Minister. Now you vote for the party. It's hard to imagine a Labor victory, even if you have an attractive candidate against Netanyahu.

The only prospects for breaking the mold is if something happens in the center. And this is not impossible, though it's not very likely. Because historically people who broke with the political parties ended up in the political desert. So people are terribly worried before they make such a move, but it's not an impossibility.

AMOS ELON:

I must say that I was moved by Prof. Luzzatto's remark that he comes out of this discussion knowing less than before, but is at the very least confused and flabbergasted. And I'm sure Avishai will agree with me that we owe him an answer. Well, Professor Luzzatto, I can only complement you. If you are confused and flabbergasted, then you are in touch with reality. If you had any doubts about it before, then it's absolutely clear that the American attack on Iraq has not helped to resolve the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. On the contrary, it's complicated it even more. It's made it much more dangerous, as Avishai has brilliantly explained, it has brought us dangerously closer to the stage where it becomes an irresolvable religious conflict between two civilizations or religions or whatever you call it. I know that at the beginning of the Iraq war there were those who drew some hope from it, because it was assumed (wrongly, of course – that with the U.S. becoming a Middle Eastern power – much as the British were a Middle Eastern power after the First World War) that that would help in getting Palestinians and Israelis closer. But this was a pipe dream, as unrealistic and irresponsible as the hope that through the American Marines we should get Iraq to be a democracy in the Middle East that would radiate out in Saudi Arabia or Iran, or other places where democracy has not yet arrived. So, I was very moved by that. Bravo. You are in touch.

As Avishai has already said, I don't think the Americans or the Europeans can do a lot to resolve the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. I think it's up to the Palestinians now and to the Israelis. They have to arrive at it. Israel is not the Israel that it was during the Suez War. Israel is a nuclear power today. The Thirty Years' War, as I tried to explain, is not going to happen now. It's going to be a two-second nuclear war, that's going to obliterate everybody. Let us hope that the two sides will not miss the opportunity now, as they did so often in the past 30 years. I mentioned yesterday that there were 3 or 4 opportunities in which the conflict could not have been resolved in a profound sense, but it could have been limited. It could have been shifted. But these opportunities were missed. I'm sorry Avishai that when you stressed this point, you didn't mention that in international politics, timing is of the essence. The timing was missed during the last 30 or 40 years. Let's hope they don't miss it again.

AVISHAI MARGALIT:

Once an Irish journalist said to me, that if you think you have the answer, it means that you don't understand the problem.

SERGIO MINERBI:

Yesterday, with the budget vote. The 54-56 is no longer the situation. We now have 64-53. The rebels joined Sharon for the budget. This is an interesting point. Nobody was sure it would happen until the end. We have a different situation now. For how long, I don't know.

NOURIT MELCER:

I am only representing myself as a mother of children, and I'm only worried about that aspect. And I think that one thing that has not been said around this table is the fact that there is a wall to start with is devastating. I think that the generation that saw the fall of the Berlin Wall should not have stood by and said ok to any wall. There should not be a wall at all. That there should be a political solution that would prevent the need of a wall is true, and that should be the aim of everyone's efforts. We should not just sit behind the wall and say, "it's ok, now we're safe." It solves absolutely nothing. And I can only quote my youngest son, who questions this wall every time we pass by it. And you cannot go through Israel, on any road any more, without at some point coming up against the wall. I don't want a society that doesn't see the other side. I want to see them even if I don't like them. And I want to be able to come to terms with them, even if I have to ask for foreign help in order to do so. Maybe, as Mr. Margalit said, we shouldn't wait for things to get much worse before such assistance is brought in. That's one comment about the wall.

And now, about Europe. As an Israeli, I think that you haven't finished dealing with anti-Semitism, especially the new kind of anti-Semitism, which seems to be ok. Just last night I saw on CNN that Prince Harry of England was walking around with a swastika. If children in Europe think that that's a fun game, then there's something deeply wrong in Europe, that you haven't solved for the last 50 and I don't think that there's anyone addressing the problem seriously. The other problem that I don't think you're addressing as seriously as you should is the way you treat Muslims in Europe, and what it is that Europe is going to do about its own Muslims. And I think that that will have a terrific effect also on Israel, and also on the Israeli – Palestinian conflict. It cannot be divided. And I don't think that the Arabs themselves are dividing it so much.

PASQUALE PASQUINO:

I totally agree with what you said. We in Europe have a lot to do. And what we did today is a small contribution to what we have to do again in the future. So that's what I want to say. And I think this was a great opportunity that the Fondazione Olivetti gave us. I want to thank Laura Olivetti, and those all those who have been helping us to create more connection between Italy, the Italian Jewish community and Israel. I hope we will have other opportunities here and in Israel to continue this friendly discussion.

AMOS LUZZATTO:

I will say further thanks. The Olivetti Foundation...I have visited it more than once and we have participated in discussion seminars. I think it is very useful and an open window on current problems. I don't say on answers, but let me remind you of an old Jewish story about the Jew who cried in the streets, "I have an answer! Who will ever ask me a question?!"