

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,