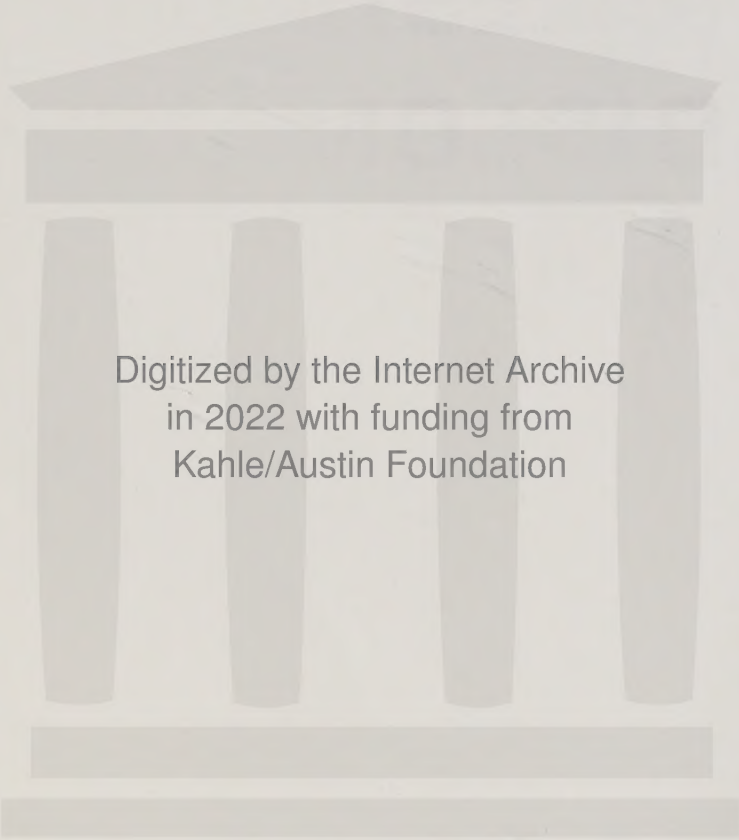


ON PALESTINIAN DIPLOMACY



DS
119.6
.S345
2006

Afif Safieh



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

ON **PALESTINIAN DIPLOMACY**



This book belongs to
South Piedmont Comm.
College Library
L.L. Polk Campus
Polkton, NC 28135



Afif Safieh

Painting on cover page by British artist Mrs. Elizabeth Harden
Picture on back cover: Pope John Paul II receiving in September 1980
Afif Safieh as Palestinian Presidential Envoy.

Published by
PLO Mission
to the United States of America

1320 18th Street, NW, Suite # 200

Washington DC 20036

Tel: (202) 974 6360

Fax: (202) 974 6278

E-mail: plomission1@aol.com

Website: www.plomission.us

Printed in April 2006 by International Graphics
10710 Tucker Street, Beltsville, Maryland 20705-2223 USA
Tel: (301) 595-5999 • Fax: (301) 595-5888
E-mail: ig@igprinting.com • Website: www.igprinting.com

CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
1. DIPLOMACY: THE ART OF DELAYING THE INEVITABLE (2001)	5
2. ROME AND ITS BELLIGERENT SPARTA (2002)	15
3. ON EDWARD SAID (2003)	23
4. WHICH WAY IS FORWARD? (2004)	27
5. YASSER ARAFAT (2004)	39
6. ANATOMY OF A MISSION (2005)	43
7. THOSE WERE THE DAYS (1995)	59

1

DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

THE ART OF DELAYING THE INEVITABLE*

A joke was extremely fashionable in Palestinian circles at another stagnating moment in the Middle East Peace Process: Yasser Arafat went to see God and told him, 'God Almighty, will there ever be peace in Palestine?' Apparently, God looked at him melancholically and said 'Yes, yes, of course, but not during my lifetime'. Accredited also to the Holy See, I have it from reliable sources that God would not mind being proven wrong. At least in this case.

In the last ten months the Palestinians have been blamed in certain influential circles as having missed a historical opportunity by rejecting the most generous offer by the most dovish Israeli government and that our Intifada allowed Likud and Sharon back to power. This perception stemmed from the undeserved good reputation that the Israeli Labour Party enjoys in the West but also from statements made by former President Clinton that Ehud Barak was bold, courageous, audacious, generous, magnanimous, constructive, creative, imaginative and innovative. English is not my first language. It is not even my second but I have never seen those concepts used in such a questionable manner. As for the favourable prejudice that Labour benefits from, I keep telling my numerous Israeli interlocutors that historically it was Labour that made Palestine unliveable for the Palestinians. What Likud does also makes Israel uninhabitable for many Jews. As a result of this misperception, unlike the 1970s when European governmental positions were far better informed when compared to their respective public opinions,

* Edited transcript of a lecture delivered at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies. Published in RUSI Journal- August 2001.

today public opinion is more sympathetic towards Palestinian suffering and more supportive of Palestinian aspirations than European official positions.

It was General Sharon's visit to the Aqsa Mosque that inflamed the situation and triggered the second Intifada. It was only the straw that broke the camel's back. We had warned Barak and Clinton not to permit this. In retrospect, there were obvious Machiavellian calculations which allowed that visit to occur. This coincided with the day that the Israeli Attorney General cleared Binyamin Netanyahu from an investigation he was conducting because of insufficient evidence. Every commentator foresaw that Netanyahu would be able to capitalize politically from this decision and stage his comeback in the political arena. At the time it was in Barak's interest that Sharon remained the leader of Likud precisely because he thought he was beatable in a national election while Netanyahu's flashy and charismatic character was seen as a more formidable challenge to Barak's re-election efforts. Barak wanted to provide Sharon with an advantage over Netanyahu by not allowing the latter to steal the limelight. Once again, however, Barak, a supposedly excellent chess player, miscalculated. As it turned out, even Sharon beat him electorally.

In my opinion, the Intifada has three explanatory factors. First, the Palestinians have witnessed 53 years of forced diasporization and 34 years of endless occupation. Forced diasporization does not only include the Palestinian refugees who happen to be in Lebanon, Syria or Jordan. Two out of every three inhabitants of the Gaza Strip are refugees in refugee camps and one out of every three inhabitants of the West Bank are refugees in refugee camps. So it's not an external phenomenon; it's also an internal factor. One also has to bear in mind that the occupation of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem is the longest military occupation in modern history with humiliation and harassment of an entire people on a daily basis.

The second factor is the ten years of an unconvincing peace process. When we went to Madrid in 1991, I qualified our attitude as being 'unreasonably reasonable'. We then accepted to function as half a delegation, representing half the people, and seeking half a solution just because we wanted to give peace a chance. In Oslo in 1993, we were promised a five-year transitional period for the accords to be implemented. By 1998, we were supposed to have achieved final status. It is useful to recall Yitzhak Rabin's maxim that 'dates are not sacred' yet if there was anything precise in the Oslo Agreement it was precisely the timetable for its implementation. There was no need for an unnecessarily protracted Peace Process. A territory that

was occupied in 1967 in less than six days can also be evacuated in six days so that we could all rest on the seventh.

After ten years of negotiations and agreements, we have received only 65 per cent of the Gaza Strip with 35 per cent still under Israeli exclusive total control since there are twenty illegal settlements and 5,000 illegal settlers in the area. In the West Bank, arrangements are even more complex. At present, we have three zones: A,B, and C. We control totally or partially 40 per cent (Zones A and B) whereas 60 per cent remain under Israel's exclusive control. What we have witnessed during the last ten years can only be described as an accelerated expansion of the settlements. Hence an expansion of the occupation rather than real withdrawal. This was more real during Labour governments including Barak's than during the Netanyahu years. The total number of illegal settlers rocketed up to 400,000. In a way, throughout those years of 'theoretical' peace making there was an Intifada in the making.

The third factor is the failed nature and the content of the Camp David talks that took place in July 2000 - talks which undoubtedly poisoned the diplomatic and political environments we are currently operating in. Why is this the case? Because for the first time since we had reached the moment of truth Palestinian public opinion discovered what was the ceiling of the possible and the permissible in this particular peace process. Barak, with Clinton's help, succeeded in projecting the image that Israel offered us 95%plus one or plus two in the territorial swap. It was never the case; the Israeli maps offered at Camp David excluded four areas: expanded East Jerusalem; the Latroun Salient; the no man's land around the West Bank between '48 and '67, and the shores of the Dead Sea. What Barak was offering was 95 per cent of 90 per cent which is close to 85 percent. Barak, recently, published an op-ed piece in the New York Times/ International Herald Tribune where he explicitly stated that Israel should keep 15 per cent of Judea and Samaria plus a security zone in the Jordan Valley. In spite of that, prominent commentators like Thomas Friedman, continue to write, with a vengeance, about the ungrateful Arafat who rejected 95 per cent as though Barak's article was never written or published.

What was the Israeli offer at the Camp David talks? Israel wanted to keep a security zone in the Jordan Valley and the settlements that are scattered in this valley although some serious Israeli generals noted that this would give Israel only one additional second of earlier warning in case of a missile attack. This is an insignificant advantage. The same generals have

also made it clear that these settlements, in the case of belligerency, would become a military burden and a liability. At Camp David, he asked for major territorial rectifications to absorb and annex to Israel 80 per cent of the settlers and since those settlements were deliberately built on the aquifers of water they would, en passant, swallow our rare hydraulic resources. The West Bank would end up as several dislocated, disconnected Banthoustans.

Thirdly, in the Camp David talks, Israel refused to acknowledge any historical, moral, or legal responsibility on the refugee issue. During informal talks, they were only accepting back a maximum of 100,000 refugees but in instalments of 1000-5000. We would have needed the entire Third Millennium to bring back a significant number of refugees.

Anything dealing with Jerusalem can hardly be seen as a minor territorial rectification. Last but not least Barak explored the possibility of returning one out of every three neighbourhoods in occupied East Jerusalem, maintaining control of almost half of the old city of Jerusalem: the Jewish quarter, the Armenian quarter (I wonder why), the Wailing Wall (50 metres) and/or the entire Western Wall (450 metres) and wanted shared sovereignty on the Islamic shrines. This came as a shock to the Palestinian leadership and society. The Palestinian state will neither have control of its airspace nor of its frontiers.

A word on the Taba talks that occurred two weeks before the Israeli elections. The Israeli proposals were undeniably more advanced than in Camp David but everybody knew that it was, by now, too late. The Israeli negotiating team did not have any legitimacy to speak on behalf of a government which was deserted by most of its coalition components and which, it was predicted by all opinion polls, was going to perform lamentably in the forthcoming elections.

Often the Israeli territorial appetite is disguised in terms of security needs and requirements even though we, and others, have told them repeatedly that security comes from regional acceptance and not from territorial aggrandizement and that we are the key to Israel's regional acceptance. Israel's doctrine towards its regional environment is better described by the concept of compellence than deterrence. Deterrence is a policy aiming to dissuade a neighbour from undertaking policies seen as detrimental or damaging to one's national interests. On the other hand, compellence, an under-exploited concept of Thomas Schelling, is a policy that tends to coerce, compel and re-order the environment in a way that is seen to suit better one's

own national interest. In spite of that, some commentators still write as though it is Palestine that occupies Israel and not the other way around.

What kinds of lessons can be drawn from ten years of diplomatic failures? The major flaw in the Peace Process is the fact that the local belligerent parties and negotiating partners were left to fend for themselves. The international community only played the role of facilitating the dialogue and financing the process. We need a decisive input from third parties. If we are left to 'sort it out' by ourselves, we will not achieve an acceptable peace. We will continue to have talks about talks and engage in negotiations *ad nauseam*. An acceptable peace with durability, without external support, is not achievable. What is democratically acceptable to the Israeli people is simply unacceptable for the Palestinian people. And vice versa. In matters of war and peace, the international will should have primacy and should prevail over the national whim.

The issue of democracy in Israel is often mentioned and used as an argument to improve Israel's public image abroad. I adhere to the school of thought which argues that Israel is a democracy for its Jewish component but I also maintain that the fact that Israel is a democratic state is not an extenuating factor but an aggravating one. There is nothing more morally disturbing than a democratic oppression supported by the informed consent of the voter and the citizen. At present, negotiations in the Middle East are taking place in a total imbalance of forces. Peace is too important to be left for the Israelis alone to decide upon yet we are constantly told that we should always rally the Israelis to any pursuit of peace. Israeli public opinion will always maintain that Israel needs to withdraw as little as possible.

I was in London when Saddam Hussein invaded and occupied Kuwait and was unequivocally vocal in condemning his occupation of Kuwait. At the time, nobody argued for a referendum in Baghdad to see if they want to withdraw and if, yes, how far. Saddam Hussein was simply asked to withdraw. International law and oil were both invoked then as an explanation for external intervention. I have news for you. We too happen to have oil: olive oil. The Palestinians crave for international intervention and have appealed for it on numerous occasions. There is a need for international protection and constructive intervention on the part of external actors. At the moment, we are negotiating and suffocating at the mercy of a balance of power which is not favourable to achieving our recognized legitimate aspirations.

Israel has three military and strategic advantages over the Palestinians. First, the Israelis maintain a nuclear monopoly in the region. Secondly, they have an overwhelming conventional military superiority vis-à-vis any possible coalition of Arab forces. Thirdly, Israel maintains an unwritten alliance with the only remaining superpower, The United States. An unwritten alliance with the only remaining superpower is even more important than a formal alliance since it allows Israel to benefit from all the advantages such an alliance can offer without having the responsibility and the restraint that alliances imply for the junior partner. An unwritten alliance also allows the senior partner to look unaccountable vis-a-vis the behaviour of its protégé and its protégé can act as a sort of 'undisciplined ally'.

The Israeli political establishment -left, right and centre -was hoping for a diplomatic outcome that would reflect Israeli intransigence, American alignment on the Israeli preference, Russian decline, European abdication, Arab impotence and what they hoped to be Palestinian resignation.

This is the framework within which we are operating. Where do we stand today? Today, Israel is incapable of suppressing the Intifada but the Intifada by itself is incapable of terminating the occupation. We have a deadlock which can only be solved by bold diplomatic initiatives. Until now, we have witnessed the failure of diplomacy, specifically preventive diplomacy, in achieving a breakthrough in our negotiations with the Israelis.

Now is the time for a major diplomatic initiative. If not now, I wonder when? I often joke with my Norwegian friends by telling them if the Oslo back channel has not put yet Palestine fully on the map it has put Norway on the map. I usually offer this thought as an incentive to European interlocutors by telling them that Europe is still perceived as an actor in search of a role and that we in the Middle East have a role in search of an actor. A merger of the two would be beneficial for all concerned. We share the desire in Europe to transform its role from merely being a 'payer 'into becoming a 'decisive player '.

The US remains a decisive player and I for one believe that the battle for Washington is winnable. A serious strategic debate will inevitably soon surface in Washington on the nature of the American-Israeli relationship. Is Israel still a strategic asset or is it gradually becoming a strategic burden and a liability? Today, after the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of Arab militant regimes, the Arab regional system is profoundly conservative and pro-western. Israel, by its insatiably territorial appetite, is defying, delegitimizing and destabilizing the network of friendship America enjoys in the

region. Arab public opinion, from Morocco to Muscat, is boiling. Islamic public opinion, from Nigeria to Malaysia, is angry at the perceived American complacency over and complicity with Israel's endless occupation of Palestinian territory. Israeli regional expansion, if perpetuated, can disrupt and endanger American global interests.

In this era of mediocrity, I often remember the late Dr Nahum Goldmann, for decades the leader of the World Jewish Congress and an enlightened Zionist. In the middle of the 1970s, he published at least two books and several articles in the American journal *Foreign Affairs* where he commented, critically, on the step-by-step shuttle diplomacy of Henry Kissinger.

Three points are as relevant today as they were pertinent then. First, watching, at close range, the deployment of Kissinger's genius in dismantling the Arab alliance of 1973 by decoupling the tracks and marginalizing the Palestinian dimension, Goldmann wrote that he believed in the centrality of the Palestinian problem and the inevitability of addressing the Palestinian dimension. He then offered what I believe is an accurate definition of the way diplomacy is still practised when dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict. Diplomacy in the Middle East, he wrote, is the art of delaying the inevitable as long as possible.

Second, Goldmann was not in favour of a gradual approach, with advances of small steps towards... nowhere. He explained the risks and found that instead of building confidence they increased the mistrust.

Being a sophisticated leader with his finger on the pulse of the Israeli national mood, Goldmann explained that each Israeli partial withdrawal - be it in the Sinai, in the Golan or in the West Bank - would be extremely problematic, with many Israelis denouncing 'the rape of Israel', the policy of 'national suicide' and so on.

Goldmann explained why he preferred a quick process of implementing an agreed-upon final status and thus having to deal once and for all with such a predictable collective outcry.

Third, the need for a more assertive American role. Goldmann writes in one of his books about a discussion he had with Moshe Dayan. He says that he told him: 'Moshe, America gives you a lot of aid and some advice. Up to now, you take all the aid and you leave the advice aside. What would happen if ever America were to tell you: you can have the aid only if you also

take the advice? 'Goldmann says that Moshe Dayan, with resignation, answered: 'Then we would have to take the advice, too'.

I am in favour of a policy of linkages and hope that one day the Americans will be converted to this idea of linking aid and advice since I believe this policy has worked twice in the last decades. Once, in 1957 when Eisenhower asked the Israelis to withdraw from the Sinai after the Suez War and once for six months in 1991 during the tenure of Bush senior and former Secretary of State James Baker when they linked the issue of the loan guarantees to the freezing of settlements. Consequently, the Israeli leadership went reluctantly to Madrid and enforced a six months freeze on building or expanding settlements. Establishing the link between American advice and aid is critical.

We are witnessing a new phenomenon in international relations: global tribes. The Jews are the global tribe par excellence. But so are the English, the Irish, the Scots, the Indians, the Chinese but also the Armenians, the Palestinians and the Arabs. Today, the Palestinians are no longer the 'small kid on the block' but because we are the Jews of the Jews we were scattered to the periphery of Palestine and beyond. The Palestinians are not only a local phenomenon but are also a regional factor and an international actor. One encounters Palestinians all over the world. The same applies for Arab communities. I believe that in any future strategic thinking these Diasporas will function as important actors in international politics. We should concentrate on maintaining the links between these communities and their countries of origin and in a parallel manner help and encourage their further integration in their countries of adoption. This is a source of political empowerment that we have somewhat neglected.

I am very encouraged by the fact that the Arab and Muslim - American communities in the United States are becoming better integrated and better equipped with political institutions to express aspirations and preferences. In the past, many of our failures were attributed to our pattern of tribal behaviours. Tomorrow the challenge for us is to behave like a global and a modern tribe -a? Challenge for all Arab communities scattered mainly in Western societies.

During the last 34 years, we Arabs have reduced our levels of expectation and have aligned ourselves with what was then called the international consensus in the UN, which was mainly formulated by European states and favoured the adoption of a two-state solution and the implementation of rel-

evant UN resolutions. Years ago, it was Kissinger who dwarfed a potential European role by stating that Europe would be unhelpful in any peace process because 'it would raise Arab expectations'. Europe has not aligned itself with Arab preferences. On the contrary, it is the Arab world that has aligned itself with the way Europe and the international community want to see the conflict resolved. The responsibilities of the international community have increased. We have respected our commitments to the international community and it is now up to the international community to respect its commitments to us. The Israelis need to be made aware of what is expected from them in the Peace Process. If this is achieved in the near future, the Israelis will vote for their leadership not in function of how much territory they are ready to condescendingly concede. Instead, they will frame their choices based on how much experience or inexperience a candidate enjoys, charisma or its absence, and the nature of their economic policies. With the absence of such an unequivocal message, the Israeli voter believes that he or she has the ability to choose a leader whose programme for the future coincides with their preference on how much territorial concession they are ready to tolerate.

I am politically very nostalgic of De Gaulle. After the 1967 War, President de Gaulle suggested 'la concertation à quatre': the co-ordination of the major four countries (China was not yet in the Security Council) to help solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The idea never really came off the ground because the Americans seemed comfortable with the Israeli victory of 1967 that compensated for their humiliations in Vietnam. The Soviets, short-sightedly, were unenthusiastic because they preferred a bi-polar international system and didn't see why they would recognize equal status to lesser countries like Britain and France. The British were not supportive because it was initially...a French initiative. A few meetings of the permanent representatives at the UN in New York took place, the idea then vanished into historical oblivion. 34 years later the conflict remains unresolved. Rather than leaving both societies 'to sort it out' in search of an elusive 'mutually acceptable solution' maybe an elegantly imposed solution by the international community - 'a mutually unacceptable formula' - would have been the only way out of this vicious circle. In the meantime, instead of a durable peace, we now have ...a permanent peace process.

2

ROME

AND ITS BELLIGERENT SPARTA^{*}

As a peace enthusiast I was heavily involved, at the end of the 80's-early 90's, in Israeli-Palestinian dialogue when every university, think-tank and political party around the world was organizing a seminar of its own to contribute to a rapprochement they saw as desirable and inevitable. In all those encounters every possible scenario in peace-making, and its opposite, was explored ad nauseum. This led many to believe, naively, that when a peace process would finally be triggered, it would be of short duration since much of the preliminary homework was already done in these fora which, though unofficial, were high-powered.

Posted in London, a very accaparating and time-consuming assignment if any, I was mercifully not engaged in the negotiating process started in Madrid in October 1991. But in 1998 I attended three meetings here in London between Yasser Arafat and the American Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright. After one of those encounters, retiring to our hotel depressed because of the absence of any tangible progress, I told Yasser Arafat: "Abu Ammar, we the Christian Palestinians are 2% of society in Palestine and we were two (Nabil Abu Rudeinah and myself) out of 8 in the Palestinian delegation: that is 25%. The Jewish community in the U.S.A. are also 2% of society, yet they constituted 8 out of 8 of the American delegation: that is 100%. We are either under-represented or they are over-represented."

^{*} *Published by the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies, RUSI news brief, August 2002.*

Before objections start flooding in, I wish to remind readers that when in any analysis of the French and British domestic scenes it is said that the Corsicans and the Scots play a disproportionate role, there is no avalanche of expressions of indignation and outrage. Yet their role and status is modest in comparison.

THE LOSS OF AN ALLY AND THE LOSS OF AN ENEMY

Between 1985-1987 I spent two years as visiting scholar at Harvard University. Two memories stick out:

1. It was obvious then, in academic and political circles, that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a matter of years away. Within the Third World and in some leftist Western circles there was a certain disquiet about the possible global and regional repercussions of such a major alteration in the international system. To my surprise, within pro-Israeli circles in America, a worry of a different nature was manifesting itself. Contrary to those who were assessing the possible impact of the loss of "an ally", their worry was about the loss of... "an enemy", what it might signify for the *raison-d'être* and the strategic function and utility of Israel in American foreign policy as a bastion and strategic asset to contain Soviet expansionism. It was precisely during this period that the ideological construction of an alternative global threat, the peril of Islam, took shape. This self-fulfilling theory/prophesy/ideology gained a momentum of its own, rendered more plausible by the shallowness, irrationality and extremism of some Oriental responses to Occidental challenges.
2. In magazines like *Commentary* and *The New Republic* there was an acute awareness that one day a peace process would have to get started and a number of serious articles explored the avenues that might suit Israeli interests best. The architecture and the choreography of negotiations, it was said, had to reflect the "non-centrality" of the Palestinian problem in the Middle East and there was a need to de-couple the different negotiating tracks to make it difficult to link and to synchronize progress. The American role had to be limited to convene the parties to the negotiating table, but not to be decisive towards achieving a certain finality. The outcome would be "as agreed upon by the

local negotiating sides" as though the U.S.A. had no international commitments in the United Nations, no international responsibilities necessitating leadership and guidance, no regional interests and friendships that such a complacent attitude towards the Israeli territorial appetite might jeopardise.

When after the Gulf War of 1991 the American administration felt the need to invite for a Peace conference (out of fidelity to the Arab members of the coalition, to confer retroactive respectability to the war in the Gulf by showing sensitivity also to the endless ordeal of the Palestinians etc), that was the model of negotiations suggested. It was considered to be an offer Israel could not refuse precisely because it corresponded to its preferred negotiating strategy. It was called "the only game in town", "the only deal around". Negotiations started in Madrid end of October 1991 and then predictably stagnated in Washington until August 1993 when a parallel and secret track witnessed a breakthrough the Americans were not involved in.

THE DECLINE OF THE ARABISTS

Henry Kissinger has had an enduring impact on American foreign policy beyond his years of service. He was, as National Security Advisor, the one who undermined in 1970 the Rogers plan, by repeating to whoever cared to listen that it was precisely only that: a Rogers plan. Once dear Henry succeeded in supplanting Rogers at the State Department, he proceeded to purge the Arabists because, for him, they were infected by "localitis" and gradually replaced them by staff who had acquired their political experience working in the many organs of the pro-Israeli lobby. Their influence varied depending on the personality of the Secretary of State. It was immense during the time of George Schultz, Warren Christopher, Madeleine Albright, who were after all employees of the President not belonging to the inner circle but contained with James Baker who was a close friend and behaved as a partner to George Bush Sr.

A MESSENGER WITHOUT A MESSAGE

Dennis Ross emerged as the most influential of the pro-Israelis among the senior civil servants, no thanks to his powerful intellect, but because of his survival capabilities and hence his durability. For 12 years he was a frequent visitor to the area. He incarnated the self-inflicted impotence of the only remaining superpower. He was the most distinguished representative of

the strategy outlined in Commentary Magazine. He advocated this approach tirelessly. He practiced it unwaveringly. I called him on BBC-World 'a messenger without a message' since he never came with any original idea or any American proposal not cleared in advance with the Israeli government, but always conveyed and explained the Israeli position. The U.S.A., the only global superpower, thus neutralised, had abdicated its role and status in favour of its regional protégé Israel. History will record that if Dennis Ross had nothing to do with the diplomatic breakthrough of 1993, he was heavily guilty of the breakdown in 2000. His name will always be associated with bias, partiality and the absence of American even-handedness in the quest for peace in the Middle East. The way Dennis Ross conducted himself, the Palestinians were reduced to negotiate at the mercy of a very asymmetrical balance of power. He allowed the Israeli side to indulge in the illusion that the diplomatic outcome will reflect Israeli power and American alignment on the Israeli preference. Israeli "generosity" will decide the territorial contours of the agreement.

ROME AND ITS BELLIGERENT SPARTA

The study of American-Israeli relations has fascinated, intrigued, occupied and preoccupied two generations of scholars. Two competing schools of thought addressed the 'who wags whom' debate. The first school spoke of "an American Israel" with the United States dictating to the local ally what should be its regional policy in accordance with the American global vision. Noam Chomsky had written, two decades ago, that Washington was the contemporary Rome and Israel its regional belligerent Sparta.

The second school projects the image of "an Israeli America," a complex relationship where the global superpower simply adopts the regional policy of its client state and integrates it in its global strategy. This is seen as a result of the powerful pro-Israeli lobby that succeeded in turning "Capitol Hill into another Israeli occupied territory".

I have always believed that both schools of thought were correct but at different moments in history, depending on a variety of considerations like the strength -electoral and intellectual- of the American president, on how comfortable he is in the country and in Congress and how comfortable the United States is in the world. After the horror of 9/11, when the predictable retaliation was being discussed, the pro-Israeli lobby immediately emerged as the 'maximalist school', which wanted to elastically expand the theatre of

operations beyond Afghanistan to engulf more countries. America now prepares itself to wage an attack against Iraq that nothing justifies except Israel's regional hegemonic inclinations. The lobby has really grown accustomed to use one muscle too many and to go one pressure too far. The satisfaction among the right wing Israeli establishment is immense now that the U.S.A. appears to be Israel's regional belligerent Sparta.

THE TWO AMERICAS

In today's administration the pro-Israeli lobby, in alliance with the Christian fundamentalists and their delirious theology, has totally dominated and confiscated the debate around American foreign policy in the Middle East. During a recent quick visit to America on the third and fourth of July, I was dazzled to watch on all TV channels the artificially imported Israeli discourse on insecurity and terrorism, giving the impression that the U.S.A. was under massive attack on Independence Day. Colin Powell and the State Department still represent a pocket of resistance, aided occasionally by the distant voices of Jimmy Carter, Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinsky. When Ariel Sharon waged his reinvasion of the occupied territories, I believe that President Bush expected the withdrawal to take place "now", "immediately" and "without delay" but had to retract because of massive pressures in Washington. Bush was defeated even before Powell departed for his slow motion trip to the area. Again, it turned out that the lobby does not suffer from "dual loyalty". When, on the rare occasion, the President happens to differ with an Israeli Prime Minister, the lobby sides...not with the President. Both Bushes, the father and the son, experienced that in less than a decade.

When Vice-President Cheney passed through London in March on his way to the region, I published in *The Guardian* an open letter in which I wrote: "The Arab world has no ideological dispute with the U.S.A. Our belief is that there are two Americas, two political cultures, two historical memories. There is the America of the early settlers who, on discovering the New World, clashed with the indigenous population and almost totally exterminated them. The America that established slavery and had an elastic conception of its frontiers expanding shamelessly at the expense of Mexico. This is the America that Ariel Sharon always seeks an alliance with. When "the shared values" are invoked, it is in this national experience that the common traditions are deeply rooted.

But there is another America. The America of the War of Independence against the colonial power. The America which took the painful decision to undergo a Civil War to abolish slavery. The America of Woodrow Wilson which came to the Versailles conference upholding the principle of Self Determination. The America of the Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King's dream. It is this America that we Palestinians appeal to and seek an alliance with. These two Americas do not coincide with Democratic America and Republican America. The two historical memories cross this political divide".

I could have added the America of Dwight Eisenhower who in 1956-57, just after the Suez War, obtained through 'friendly persuasion' Israel's withdrawal out of the occupied Sinai in 24 hours. Israel, then was governed by Ben Gurion and, unlike President Bush, Eisenhower obtained Israeli acquiescence without having the "reward" of the Saudi initiative, which enjoys Palestinian blessings and now has been endorsed by the Arab Summit of Beirut.

CHOICES

Decision-makers in Washington had always a choice between a foreign policy that will make America loved and respected around the world or a policy that will make it feared and hated. They now have to decide what is the unfinished business on the international agenda: disciplining Israel diplomatically or crushing Iraq Militarily. In the meantime, Dennis Ross, after a 12 years stint in the State Department, is back home in the pro-Israeli lobby as Director of the Washington Institute for Near East policy. In the new administration, the center of gravity of the pro-Israeli lobby moved from the State Department to the Department of Defence. He frequently appears on all TV channels on both sides of the Atlantic as the peacemaker par excellence pontificating in the most irritating fashion as though he was an equidistant third party. He indulges in the character assassination of Yasser Arafat, trying to politically demolish what the military campaigns of Ariel Sharon did not succeed in achieving.

In a very gloomy situation, the birth of the new structure of the Quartet US-UN-EU and Russia is the only source of optimism in the immediate future. It has the double advantage of reintroducing important players who were deliberately excluded or marginalised because, as Kissinger had written, their presence might "raise Arab expectations" and of strengthening the

more reasonable and decent school of thought within the American administration. With the vision of the two-State solution, we now have the light. The Quartet could be the missing tunnel.

I have always believed that the Arab-Israeli conflict was a test between moral courage and political cowardice. Having encountered cowardice so frequently, I still hope that we may soon have a rendez- vous with History.

3

ON EDWARD SAID *

Edward was profoundly Palestinian. Edward was totally cosmopolitan. Edward was the universal intellectual par excellence.

I still remember his devastating critique of Samuel Huntington's "Clash of civilisations" in which he argued that even the city-states of Ancient Greece owed a lot and borrowed much from those they considered "barbarians". That the Roman Empire was, by its very nature, a pluri-ethnic multi-cultural society. On the basis of this vision of the constant cross-fertilisation of cultures and civilisations, I believe that Edward Said was our Palestinian contribution to the international intellectual landscape, our Palestinian input in contemporary political thought.

Edward was a charming private person. Edward was an immensely charismatic public figure. For Christ'l and I, Edward was a very close and dear friend since 1978 when we met in Beirut. He had just published "Orientalism" which was hailed more as an event rather than simply one more book. In academic circles, there will always be "a before Orientalism" and "an after Orientalism".

Is there a contradiction due to the fact that Edward was a severe critic of the Palestinian National Authority and my being here to pay tribute to his legacy and to his memory? Not at all. Edward and I agreed, years ago, that the Palestinian people had neither the authority they deserve nor the opposition they need. We agreed, years ago, that the P.L.O. was at the same time

* *Memorial Service. Friends House - London, November 6, 2003.*

an idea and an institution. I happen to represent the institution. I hope with dignity. He was the powerful vehicle of the idea. And ideas are immortal.

One of Edward's favourite thinkers, Antonio Gramsci wrote brilliantly about the special relationship between intellectuals and the oppressed: "those who think because they suffer and those who suffer because they think". An opinion as though tailored specially for Edward. The fact that today supporters of Palestinian aspirations are no more a marginal minority but belong to the mainstream in Europe owes much to Edward's prolific writing and his tireless lecturing. Edward would have been delighted by the results of the opinion poll conducted by the European Commission which showed that 59% of European public opinion consider Israeli policies and practices to be the greatest threat to world peace. Of course the pro-Israeli inquisition will try, through their usual intellectual terrorism, to drag in the mud those who undertook the poll and those whose opinions it expressed, yet the message from European public opinion is clear:

- Anti-semitism today is the persecution of Palestinian society by the Israeli state.
- It is the constant American alignment on the Israeli preference that is poisoning international relations.
- It is the collusion between the Israeli and the American agendas that has put America on a collision course with the Arab and the Muslim World.
- The European governments are too timid, insufficiently assertive, too complacent in their dealings with an Israel that daily violates international law and defies the international will.

All through his life, Edward denounced both Judeophobia and Islamophobia. He never indulged in comparative victimology or martyrology. He never volunteered mechanisms and methods to measure pain or to quantify suffering.

If I were a Jew or a Gypsy, the Holocaust would be the most horrible event in History. If I were a Black African it would be Slavery and Apartheid. If I were a Native American, it would be the discovery of the New World by European explorers and settlers that resulted in near total extermination. If I were an Armenian it would be the Ottoman-Turkish

massacres. And if I happen to be a Palestinian, it would be the Nakba-Catastrophe. No one people has a monopoly on human suffering. It is not advisable to try to establish a hierarchy of suffering. Humanity should consider all the above as morally repugnant and politically unacceptable. And humanity is increasingly beginning to express its adhesion to the principle that there is only one mankind and not different kinds of men and women. This too we all owe to Edward Said.

The last time I met Edward was at his keynote speech at SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies) on the January 29, 2003. It was followed by a small dinner, in his honour, nowhere else but in The British Museum. Knowing that the end was near, I felt that the place was extremely well chosen to pay tribute to a living monument, a roving encyclopaedia. If ever we the Palestinians were to have, like in Paris, a Pantheon of our own "for those to whom the nation is indebted", it is undeniably there that Edward Said would belong.

Bing Crosby, the singer, said of Frank Sinatra: "such a voice happens only once in a lifetime. Why the hell did it have to happen during my lifetime?".

Edward, we are all proud, we all feel immensely privileged that you "happened" during our lifetime.

4

WHICH WAY IS FORWARD?*

I

I would like to thank Professor Eugene Rogan and St Anthony's College for organising this series of lectures: "Palestinians on Palestine: The way forward." Let us hope that this initiative will result in obliging the speakers, myself included, to think deep into that important topic and thus help elevate a necessary debate that is long overdue.

The title of this lecture is followed by a question mark which, with me, is not unusual. A lecture I gave in 1986 at M.I.T. was titled: "dead ends?" and a friend told me then that the question mark was my only concession to optimism. Lectures I gave in 1994 in California at the invitation of the "World Affairs Council" were titled: "Palestine: a State in the making?" Then the question mark was my only concession to pessimism. Today, it is there as a sign of humility, a recognition that there are other avenues offered to Palestinian public opinion, an admission that we are in a realm where there are hardly any certainties.

II

I will start with Israel, since after all, it is Israel that occupies Palestine and not the other way around. The first President of the State of Israel, Chaim

* *St Anthony's College, Oxford University, January 23, 2004.*

Weizman, wrote "I am certain the world will judge the Jewish State by how it will treat the Arabs" (*Trial and error* - London 1949 page 566). Today, the "we did not know" attitude by Israelis is as unbelievable and as unacceptable as it was decades ago in other circumstances. Palestinian historians confirmed by Israeli revisionist colleagues, have shown how the demographic upheaval was orchestrated in Mandatory Palestine, how the majority was reduced to a minority and how the minority was propelled to become a majority. The events of the last three years show us that the Palestinian Nakba / Catastrophe was not a frozen moment in History that has occurred some time in 1948, but is an ongoing process, deploying itself until this very day with great savagery, aiming at acquiring as much of Palestinian geography as possible with as little of Palestinian demography as possible. It is interesting to note that the oppressors seem to hate their victims much more than the victims hate their oppressors. And that the victims have moved faster than their oppressors beyond double negation towards mutual recognition.

The Israeli Labour party has enjoyed internationally an undeserved good reputation. I have often told Israeli interlocutors that it was Labour that made Palestine unliveable to Palestinians. What Likud does is make Israel also unliveable to many Jews. The ethnic cleansing of 1948, the Suez war of 1956, the initiative for the 1967 war, the beginning of the illegal settlement building, the idea for a separation wall.... it was Labour, Labour, and Labour.

When Barak faded away in 2001 and Sharon won by a landslide, most Israeli analysts put the blame on Yasser Arafat, the absence of a partner and Palestinian untrustworthiness since they responded to the most "generous" offer with an armed Intifada, proving that the Palestinians had a hidden agenda- total liberation not just the Two States solution.

I personally attribute the repeated defeats of the Labour party to 3 major factors:

- (a) The Israeli labour movement has been in constant decline since 1948. If one

looks at the successive compositions of the Knesset, one would notice that the Labour contingent in parliament was regularly shrinking even in the elections they won. They lost their dominance and centrality in 1977 with the first Menahem Begin victory. This is mainly due to sociological, anthropological,

tribal reasons. Labour never succeeded in attracting a significant number of Oriental Jews. And Oriental Jews were by 1990 over 60 percent of Jewish Israeli society. Yes, in the decade of the nineties a million Russian Jews and Russian non-Jews flocked into the country but few joined Labour. This massive immigration changed the balance between the Sephardim and Ashkenazi Jews but it further plunged Labour into its historical decline. Then there was the loss of the Palestinian Israeli voters, 50 percent of whom used traditionally to vote Labour. That was due to the multiplication of Palestinian Israeli lists compounded with repeated Labour blunders such as the war on Lebanon in 1996, the Qana massacre and the ferocious repression of October 2000 when peaceful demonstrators were showered not with water but with lethal bullets resulting in 13 fatalities. A party that does not appeal to the Oriental Jews, that does not attract the Russian vote and has repelled its Arab supporters, is surely heading towards its electoral Waterloo. Especially if it is led by the Israeli Bonaparte/Barak who had already succeeded in antagonizing his Labour colleagues and alienating his coalition partners.

- (b) The political price paid for the unequal partnership of the Likud-Labour coalition between 2001-2003 produced the lamentable results in 2003 by Amiran Mitzna, a decent but underwhelmingly charismatic leader. Labour accepted the humiliating treatment of a junior partner with no say on policy and strategy yet was there to offer more domestic acceptability and international respectability. A mere fig leaf for Sharon simply because Ben Eliezar and Shimon Peres were both afraid that in opposition they will move from the "who is who"? to become the "who is he?" of Israeli politics.
- (c) The ephemeral passage of Ehud Barak at the helm of the Labour party. The emergence of Ehud Barak on the political scene was internationally boisterously welcomed. He was hailed as the most decorated Israeli officer, a strategic thinker, a mathematician, a gifted pianist, a "dégustateur" of classical music. Rabin had been elevated to sainthood after his martyrdom. Barak was elevated to sainthood even before his election. Analysts forgot to observe that he was too young to have played

a significant role in the conventional Arab-Israeli wars, that all his decorations were earned for his responsibility in hit-teams and death-squad operations, which inevitably affects one's psyche and one's *modus operandi*. His complex and tortuous personality was best demonstrated just after his comfortable electoral victory when he spent all of the 45 days of coalition building finding ways to humiliate, diminish and dwarf his colleagues in Labour by giving them each the ministries they did not want. Commentators did not explain enough his unprincipled nature. When he terminated his career in the army and was preparing his entry into politics he hesitated whether to join Labour or Likud. Only assurances that Rabin might favour him as his "*dauphin désigné*" swayed him to opt for Labour.

Conflicting perceptions of what really took place during the Camp David talks will continue to plague international relations for some time. Aided by President Clinton himself, media reports spoke of Barak as having been not only bold, audacious, courageous, magnanimous and generous but also constructive, creative, imaginative and innovative. Now English is not my first language. It is not even my second but I have never heard so many words used in such a questionable manner. Yes, Barak went further than other Israeli leaders had ventured. But he had to. His predecessors had dealt with transitional arrangements for the interim period while, at Camp David, with inexcusable delays, final status issues were at last in discussion. He made a generous offer? Bearing in mind the history of dispossession, dispersion and domination, the mere usage of the word "generous" is offending or tactless to say the least. 95 percent? Since the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza strip together are only 22 percent of Mandatory Palestine, a 100 percent offer can hardly be described as a generous offer. But was it really 95 %? Robert Malley, an American official who took part in Camp David believes that it was 91 percent (The New York Times, July 9, 2001) while Barak advocated keeping "about 15 percent of Judea and Samaria" and wanted "to ensure a wide security zone in the Jordan Valley" (The New York Times, May 25, 2001). The differences over what was really proposed stem from the chaotic, informal, poorly choreographed encounters in Camp David.

At Taba, a few months later, The Israeli team "offered" territorially around 5 percent more, which is sufficient proof that Yasser Arafat was justified in his rejection of the Camp David deal, whatever that really was. But why did Taba fail? Mainly for two reasons. First, Barak, his coalition in tat-

ters, had unwisely called for anticipated elections. The prediction of opinion polls was that he was heading for a poor performance to the extent that Attorney General Rubenstein declared that the Israeli team had no legitimacy to conduct diplomacy on behalf of the state. The second reason was equally significant. Within the Barak camp there were two schools of thought, both related to how to win the coming elections. The first school of thought advocated moderating the Israeli negotiating posture so that an agreement is reached with the Palestinians which will bring back into the fold the disenchanted Jewish peace camp and the Palestinian Israelis. The other group, which importantly included Barak himself, considered that both those categories would anyway vote for Barak as Prime Minister, *faute de mieux*, took them thus for granted and favoured a radicalisation of the Israeli stand. For them, this strategy will allow to recapture the central ground, the floating votes, the undecided who were tilting in favour of Sharon. Needless to say, the Barak school prevailed, the Taba talks ended inconclusively, and the rest is ... History.

In 1982-1983, an Israeli Commission of Inquiry had ruled that Ariel Sharon was "not fit for public office," yet today, he is not in jail but in power, with high approval ratings, a large majority and a coalition of right-wing, extreme right-wing parties, settler networks and Jewish fundamentalists most of whom agree on annexation and the transferist ideology. Sharon has different combinations of alternative coalition partners if need be. And if ever he is reduced to resignation, the obvious successor is Netanyahu, which would be the continuation of the same plus the sound bites and the one liners. The Palestinians, not only in the Occupied Territories, but within pre-1967 Israel, are constantly referred to as "a demographic threat," a "time bomb," a "fifth column." An expert who was invited to speak recently at a Likud Herzlia Conference shamelessly advocated "enforced family planning," In other words, the collective sterilisation of the Palestinian population.

What reveals best the prevailing and dominant political culture in Israel is a recent interview with Benny Morris in the *Haaretz* on January 8, 2004. Displaying a fascinating dual and schizophrenic personality - Historian Benny Morris and Citizen Benny Morris - a sort of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Morris explains, in great detail, that his research during the last decade confirms the results of his previous publications. Working on newly declassified documents, he states that he has discovered even more massacres, also twelve cases of rape which he admits are "just the tip of the iceberg" since the

Palestinian traditional society tends to hush-hush such occurrences, and that the units of the Haganah (not only the Irgun of Menahem Begin) were given "operational orders that stated explicitly that they were to uproot the villagers, expel them and destroy the villages themselves." All this is said in a clinical fashion, with no emotion and where ethical considerations are totally absent. For him, "there are circumstances in history that justify ethnic cleansing" and "you can't make an omelette without breaking eggs." It was "inevitable" if Israel were to be created.

Anyway, all this we knew already. That was the historian Morris speaking. The frightening part is when he gives way to Citizen Morris. His grievance, and he has one, is the unfinished business of 1948. He says: "Ben Gurion made a serious historical mistake in 1948...he got cold feet during the war. In the end, he faltered" and "because he did not complete the transfer in 1948, he left a large and volatile demographic reserve in the West Bank and Gaza and within Israel itself." Morris continues, "had he carried out a full expulsion - rather than a partial one - he would have stabilised the State of Israel for generations."

Today, the unfinished business left by Ben Gurion, Sharon hopes to address by the accelerated building of the Wall of Shame snaking through the West Bank. All those who will be trapped outside the Wall and many of those who will be caged within the Wall will be actively "encouraged" to emigrate. I fully agree with the verdict of Israeli scholar Baruch Kimmerling that Sharon aims at "politicide", the elimination of central national Palestinian representation and authority. It is obviously the Palestinians who have no partner for peace.

III

It is obviously the Palestinians who have no partner for peace. The Israeli side wants a diplomatic outcome that reflects Israeli power and intransigence, American total alignment on the Israeli preference, Russian decline, European abdication, Arab impotence and what they hope to be Palestinian resignation.

De Gaulle, a statesman like they make them no more, because of his familiarity with the psychology of belligerents and the pathology of conflict advised in 1967 in favour of an elegantly imposed solution through what he called "*la concertation à quatre*" (the coordination of the four major powers.

China was not yet in the Security Council). This idea never really took off. The Americans were not unhappy with the Israeli military victory since it compensated the humiliations of Vietnam. The Soviets, short-sighted as they often could be, preferred the bi-polar constellation and did not want to give equal status to lesser countries like Britain and France. And London was unenthusiastic simply because the idea was French to begin with. Since then, instead of a durable peace, we have had a permanent peace...process.

The peace-making approach adopted, mainly because it suited Israel's preferred negotiating strategy, left it all to the local belligerent parties/negotiating partners to "sort it out" amongst themselves. Today it is clear that what is democratically acceptable to the Israelis is unacceptable to the Palestinians, and vice versa.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

I have always observed a certain self-restraint when dealing with domestic Palestinian issues. I believe this is the proper pattern of behaviour for civil servants. This code of conduct is not always respected and, at moments, one believes that civil servants should not refrain from injecting their input into the national debate.

One cannot study Palestinian strategies in isolation from the regional Arab State system, its natural political environment. These last decades, the Arab world has become a regional grouping where no advantage is reaped by befriending it, nor any risk is taken by antagonising it. In addition, the Arab world suffers from a double crisis: the crisis of regimes and a crisis of the oppositions. Pan-Arab nationalism is still, 33 years later, orphaned by the death of Abdel Nasser. The Arab left has not yet recovered from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Soviet model. The Liberal school of thought never really existed as an organised trend. We are left with only the Islamic parties who, for a majority of public opinion, do not seem to be the desirable appetising alternative to the unrepresentative, incompetent and corrupt governments in place and thus, paradoxically, result in prolonging their durability.

The PLO, it has to be recognised, has always functioned as a multi-party system. In spite of external pressures and internal "opportunities" there was never an attempt to crush or eliminate a party, a trend or an opposition. At least not by the leadership. On the contrary, Tripoli 1983 was an attempt by

an insurrection backed by a regional power to eliminate the legitimate leadership. But the democracy and pluralism were often chaotic and the usual quest for consensus among the factions could result at crucial moments in the paralysis of decision-making. I have always believed that, like all other societies, differences of opinion were not only healthy, but simply normal. And like any other society, we are condemned to have either unity/unanimity or a strategy. At times, I have to say, we seem to have neither unanimity nor a strategy.

Let me, first of all, waive away what I consider to be an optical illusion: the one bi-national state. This is not a new strategic vision, but a recycled, reheated old dish. In the late sixties, the resurrecting Palestinian national movement formulated the proposal of a unitary democratic bi-cultural, multi-confessional, pluri-ethnic State. That was genuinely a "generous offer" from those who believed to have become "the Jews of the Israelis" yet did not want those who chose to be their enemies to become "the Palestinians of the Palestinians." This project emerged at a moment in History when we believed - naively - that we were on our way to victory. Today, those who speak of the bi-national State do it out of resignation that the occupation is irreversible and suffer from a psychology of failure and a mentality of defeat. Besides my doubts about the feasibility of this proposal, I have serious reservations about its desirability. A fanaticised Israeli Jewish community is hardly a partner one would seek with relish as co-citizens. The disparity between both societies - and the qualitative gap is widening - makes the One-State formula a mechanism for the perpetuation of the domination of one community by the other. In addition to that, I personally believe that many more refugees can exercise their right to return to their homes and hometowns, but mainly to their homeland - the nascent Palestinian State - within the framework of the Two-State solution rather than the One-State solution. Those who see this slogan as a tactical tool, a sort of scarecrow, to convince and frighten the Israeli society in favour of withdrawal must have realised that its deterrent value is limited because of a belief in Israel that the apartheid reality can be prolonged the way it operated in South Africa for decades in spite of the huge numerical imbalance. The Israeli government wants a One-State solution - a Jewish State - and a no state formula for the Palestinians.

The Two-State solution has been adopted by the Palestinian national movement since the October/Ramadan/Kippur War of 1973 which was the real demarcation line in strategic thinking in the Arab world. With self-con-

fidence restored, a political maturity manifested itself distinguishing the desirable, the possible and the acceptable. The huge aerial bridge by the American administration to the Israeli army was proof enough that the USA will never allow Israel to be defeated militarily. Since then, the absence of an Arab arms industry, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the "loosening" of relations between the Arab military actors and the de-linking of any serious coordination between those actors and Arab oil producing countries all were contributing factors to the absence of a credible Arab military option.

In the absence of an Arab military option, is there a credible Palestinian military option? I think not and never thought so. During our presence on the Lebanese theatre, our aim was to remain a military actor so that we could be recognised as a diplomatic factor. In the diplomatic arena, during those years we were not a rejectionist force but the rejected party. The first Intifada of 1987, which operated on the Palestinian scene as the October War did for the Arab State system, allowed us both to proclaim our national existence (Independence - Algiers, 1988) and to demonstrate our availability to co-existence.

The Mitchell Report admits that the first weeks of the second Intifada were mainly non-violent, at least from the Palestinian side. It was the brutal and ferocious nature of Israeli repression - over one hundred Palestinian fatalities in the first two weeks - that pushed a few in our ranks to use - unwisely - the few weapons they disposed of, thus allowing the Israelis to further escalate. I wish we all had remembered the wisdom of the late Faisal Husseini: "If you want to defy Tyson, don't invite him to the boxing ring, but to the chess board." The genius of the first Intifada was its non-violent nature which neutralised most of Israel's military arsenal. This time, they had no restraint in using their Merkava tanks, their Apache helicopters and their F16's. Very few people, especially not pro-Israelis, are morally qualified to give us lessons in political ethics, but it is high time we all realised that suicide bombings are counter productive. At least in two moments in recent history, they had devastating effects on the national interest.

It is not true that 9/11 had an immediate effect on changing American foreign policy on Israel/Palestine. Preparing to wage war in Afghanistan, the American administration, along with several European countries, was then keen to be perceived as pursuing an active role in the pursuit of peace. Asked to exercise self restraint and to cause no embarrassment, Ariel Sharon was complaining publicly that Israel was being treated like the Czechoslovakia of

1939, abandoned to the territorial appetite of its neighbours. It is a public secret that Bush, still interested in winning the hearts and minds in the Arab and the Muslim world, was growing increasingly impatient with a reluctant Sharon and banged the telephone, interrupting a difficult and unpleasant conversation. Bush then designated General Zinni as his special envoy, which was good news because that presidential envoy for once was not from the American Jewish community, was a General himself and would not be impressed and intimidated by the physique or the personality of Sharon, and was a former Commander of the American forces in the Gulf, hence fully aware of the burden of Israeli intransigence on American - Arab relations. In brief, for us the ideal envoy. Bush furthermore summoned - not invited, summoned - Sharon to Washington. That was end of November 2001. On the eve of both Sharon's difficult visit to Washington and of the arrival of Zinni to Palestine/Israel, two suicide bombings made the Zinni visit a failure by shrinking its purpose to the security dimension instead of the political horizon and saved Sharon's visit, making it a major success. It is then that Sharon, with the help of influential circles within the Administration, convinced Bush that his repression of our people was part of the global war on terrorism.

The second moment when suicide bombing inflicted strategic damage on our national interest was in March 2002, when the Arab Summit in Beirut adopted the Saudi initiative with Palestinian blessings. Sharon had a choice: either responding to a collective diplomatic invitation, or retaliating to a military provocation. One could have predicted his preference in advance.

Today, clinically, Israel has to become aware that it cannot terminate the Intifada. Today, clinically, we have to be aware that by the Intifada alone, we cannot terminate the occupation. The fact that we remain undefeated, untamed, undomesticated is our victory. We should never forget the primacy of politics. In the final analysis, battles and wars are won politically, not militarily. Most national liberation movements won politically, not militarily. If the aim is the Two-State solution, and it is, we have already won diplomatically and politically. UN Security Council resolution 1397, the Road Map, the "Bush vision," all recognise a need to end "the" occupation that started in 1967 and a Two-State solution. Our remaining challenge is to translate this victory geographically, territorially.

The choice for Palestinian society is not, like it is sometime superficially presented, between resistance and non-resistance - Intifada or no Intifada,

but the choice is between different means of expression of our rejection of occupation. Bearing in mind all the factors mentioned above, I hope and advocate with great conviction, to see a total conversion in favour of a confrontational strategy of popular non-violent resistance. This is not the option of the naïve or of those who suffer of struggle fatigue. It is an efficient and a very convincing vehicle for Palestinian empowerment. The Israeli side will try to sabotage and disrupt such an approach the way they dealt with Palestinian repeated cease fires through incursions into the urban centres and targeted and less targeted assassinations. Hence the need for Palestinian cohesion and discipline. For the different factions, it will constitute a formidable challenge. It is by far more difficult and demanding to organise, channel and choreograph the struggle of 3.5 million people than to manage a certain number of cells of 3 persons each. Such a strategy will involve all strata of society. Women will play the prominent role they aspire for. The Israeli Palestinians and the Palestinians of the Diaspora will find it easier to contribute and complement such a struggle. The Israeli peace camp would welcome and join such an approach, propelling itself again on the ascendancy trend. The international NGO network can become a partner, physically, in our daily struggle. A popular non-violent strategy will promote the question of Palestine as the universal battle for Justice of our time.

In a Brecht play on Galileo, there is an interesting scene where a disciple says: "Unhappy are the people who have no heroes," to which Galileo responds: "Unhappy are the people who still have a need for heroes." We are obviously still in need of heroes. I bow in respect for the Palestinian collective hero - the people themselves - for their steadfastness, their endurance, their capacity to absorb unimaginable pain and suffering. And I firmly believe that there is today a need to define or redefine heroism.

5

YASSER ARAFAT*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

No, he was not infallible - but who is? - yet he was a great man, undeniably one of the greatest of the second half of the twentieth century.

Throughout his political career, Yasser Arafat was the object of relentless campaigns of character assassination-not because of what he was but because of what he represented: the Palestinian people whose mere existence was a monumental nuisance for those who coveted Palestine. With the Palestinian people threatened by historical oblivion, with our geography occupied and our demography dispersed, Yasser Arafat was the architect of the resurrecting Palestinian national movement in the mid-1960's and was its engine and locomotive for almost 40 years.

He was our own Palestinian de Gaulle and like de Gaulle he has had to struggle against foes and friends alike to maintain the rank and status of Palestine and of the Palestinians undiminished. All throughout those decades, the tragedy was the absence of an Arab Churchill and an Arab Roosevelt. But that is another story.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Making history is extremely important. So is interpreting history and disseminating one's own version of history. We still suffer an uphill battle because of the travesty of history concerning Barak's pseudo-generous offer.

* *Memorial Service. Friends House - London, December 7, 2004.*

We should never again lose the battle of the different versions of history.

Today we are being told that because Yasser Arafat is out of the way, there is a window of opportunity to revitalise the peace process. Today we are being told that because Yasser Arafat is out of the picture, the Palestinian people will finally familiarise themselves with democracy and elections.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

History will record that Yasser Arafat has led and preserved the multi-party system that is the P.L.O. History will record that, in spite of tremendous pressures, regional and international, Yasser Arafat always stood firmly against the elimination of the pluralistic nature of the national movement. And history will record that Yasser Arafat, besides his revolutionary and historical credentials acquired also, in 1996, democratic legitimacy in an internationally monitored and competitive presidential election in which Mrs Samiha Khalil, the director of the biggest N.G.O. in Palestine was the contender.

As for the peace process reactivated, we, here in London, still remember Tony Blair's speech end of September to the annual conference of the British Labour Party: "Come November, he said, I will make it my personal priority...." . Yasser Arafat was not even sick then. Come November simply meant when we will have the American presidential election behind us. There was then in the air, in the pipeline, the idea of a joint visit to Ramallah of the three major foreign ministers of the European Union: Jack Straw, Yoshka Fischer and Jacques Barnier, in order to help us regain the freedom of movement of President Arafat out of his captivity in the Muqata'a.

History will record that the reactivation of the peace process today is not due to the death of Yasser Arafat but is the resultant of the convergence of three factors:

1. Now that President Bush has secured his place in the white House for a second mandate, he might also want to secure his place in History;
2. There is immense European and international exasperation - mildly and moderately expressed by Tony Blair - with the self-inflicted impotence of the American administration for the last 4 years which has resulted in the irresponsible deterioration of the situation in Palestine/Israel;

3. There is a growing awareness around the world from Paris to Pakistan that what is poisoning international relations and creating a rift with the Arab and Muslim worlds is the unresolved Palestinian tragedy and the perceived American complacency and complicity with the Israeli territorial appetite.

Yasser Arafat, an obstacle to peace? History will record that we need an Israeli "obstacle" of a similar kind in order to make further progress in our elusive quest.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Reform they said. No, reforms we say. Reforms are not going to be a pre-condition imposed on us by the outside world. Reforms are a Palestinian expectation, a Palestinian aspiration, a Palestinian right and even a Palestinian duty.

Reform they said. No, reforms we say. The American political system is increasingly turning into a mediocracy rather than an appetising democracy where lobbies can hijack American foreign policy and where interest groups have totally domesticated and tamed an undignified political establishment.

Reform they said. No, reforms we say.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

These last weeks, most commentators, knowingly or unknowingly, repeatedly referred to, quoted or invoked Max Weber who, more than a century ago, wrote about the three phases of leadership and legitimacy:

- 1- the traditional leadership;
- 2- the charismatic leadership;
- 3- the institutional leadership.

We have had, prior to 1948, a traditional leadership. We have just witnessed the end of the charismatic era. Now begins the institutional phase. With the world as our witness, we have had a very smooth transition and the Palestinian people have demonstrated enormous maturity and a great sense of responsibility.

I once asked Yasser Arafat: "Abou Ammar, which was your happiest

day?", to which he answered, poetically, : " My happiest day? I haven't lived it yet".

About Ammar, you were, at the same time, an individual, an idea and an institution. The individual is perishable but the idea will prove to be immortal and through the institutions that you have helped create, your people will soon live that happiest day that you have devoted and dedicated your whole life for.

6

ANATOMY OF A MISSION^{*}

I feel privileged to have been invited to address such a distinguished audience at such a prestigious forum. Speaking today, almost a week before the end of my official duties in London, I cannot but recall that I started my assignment in London with a Chatham House lecture in September 1990 when I had to step in at the last moment to replace Hani Al Hassan in a session chaired by the late Sir John Moberly.

Let me first give a short history of the Palestinian diplomatic representation in London.

LOCATION

From the early 1970s until 1986 the Palestinian diplomatic representation was part of the Arab League Office in 52 Green Street. In 1986 it moved to independent premises in South Kensington at 4 Clareville Grove. For austerity measures, in 1996 we moved again to a smaller but more modern office in a lesser neighbourhood-Hammersmith at 5 Galena Road.

APPELLATION

From the early 1970s until 1988 the mission was called PLO Information Office. Then in 1988, because of our peace initiative based on

^{*} *This is a transcript of the unwritten lecture delivered by Afif Safieh the Palestinian General Delegate to the U.K. at Chatham House/The Royal Institute for International Affairs on Wednesday July 13-2005.*

our acceptance of the two state solution, and in agreement with her Majesty's government, the Delegation was upgraded to PLO General Delegation. In 1993, just after the Oslo breakthrough, the delegation was renamed Palestinian General Delegation, representing the PLO and the PNA at the same time. We were then authorised to fly the Palestinian flag which we did at a very moving ceremony attended by William Ehrman the head of NENAD the Near East/North Africa Department on behalf of the Foreign Office and the members of the Council of Arab Ambassadors.

REPRESENTATION

The first PLO representative was the late Said Hamami, from the early seventies until he was assassinated in 1978. I never met Said but he was undeniably a very effective representative and I still feel the impact of his passage in London. He was succeeded by Nabil Ramlawi, from 1978 to 1983, who was then transferred to the U.N. in Geneva. He is now in our Foreign Ministry in charge of the unit for diplomatic training. Faisal Oweida followed from 1983 till 1990 and from here was transferred to Austria. Unfortunately he died two years ago from cancer.

I am the 4th Palestinian representative in London. I do not know if there were any assassination attempts. Any way, if there were, they passed totally unnoticed by me. Concerning my health, yes I suffer from diabetes, cholesterol, high blood pressure and I am over weight and a chain smoker. My doctor, every time she sees me, tells me: "Bravo Afif for still being with us".

SIZE

In 1990, I inherited an office with 12 employees including the secretary, the receptionist and the driver. Then, because of budgetary constraints, the number was brought down to 5, to rise again gradually up to 8.

In those 15 years, I have dealt with 3 Prime Ministers: Margaret Thatcher, John Major, and Tony Blair. With 4 Secretaries of State: Douglas Hurd, Malcolm Rifkind, Robin Cook and now Jack Straw. With eleven Ministers of State: William Waldgrave, Douglas Hogg, Sir Jeremy Hanley-during the Conservative period, then with the late Derek Fatchett, Peter Hain, Brian Wilson, Geoffrey Hoon, Ben Bradshaw, Mike O'Brien Baroness Symons and now with Dr. Kim Howells.

During these 15 years I have arranged and organised 10 Arafat visits to London, three of them mainly connected to meetings with Madeleine Albright. We have more recently arranged a visit for our Prime Minister Abu Ala'a last year and this year for President Mahmoud Abbas for the London conference on the 1st March.

The upgrading was gradual. Landing in town in September 1990, it was prohibited for me to have any ministerial level contacts. Since then I have become familiar to 10 Downing Street, to the Foreign Office and to Westminster-Whitehall in general. Christ'l and I started being invited to the Tea Garden Party by Her Majesty the Queen, first with the crowd, then we were upgraded to the Diplomatic Tent, which is for junior diplomats and then to the Royal Tent itself. We have been invited to a Royal Banquet in Buckingham Palace for a visiting Head of State. We are also yearly invited to the Trooping the colours, the Lord Mayor's Banquet and to Ascot, only to discover that I am not particularly enamoured with horse racing. Without forgetting the annual invitation to the prestigious Diplomatic Dinner by De La Rue who hope to be contracted to print one day, hopefully soon, our national currency.

JOB DESCRIPTION

What does a Palestinian representative do? We have all the responsibilities, burdens and expectations of an embassy. Yet we neither have all the privileges nor the immunities nor the financial capabilities of a normal embassy. We are still a national liberation movement, still struggling for independence and statehood.

How do I define my job description? Wherever I am posted, I consider that there are 10 layers of work that we have to handle:-

- 1- Government
- 2- Parliament
- 3- Political parties
- 4- the Diplomatic corps
- 5- the media
- 6- the NGO'S

7- the Palestinian community

8- the Arab community

9- the Muslim community

10- the Jewish community

This in addition to the regular reports to the leadership and some consular duties. We neither issue passports nor visas but we authenticate documents, power of attorney etc... In moments of optimism we do have some commercial duties with companies consulting us about potential for economic transactions.

Let me go through those different "layers" of work:

1. **The government:** At the very beginning it was mainly the Foreign Office and at a sub ministerial level. Now it is the Foreign Office at all levels, but beyond it, we have to deal with many other departments, including the Prime Minister's office and different Ministries.
2. **Parliament:** I really gave great importance to my dealings and interactions with both Houses of Parliament. I was invited three times for hearings by the Select Committee for Foreign Affairs, the first time in April 1991.

In the House of Commons we have 5 institutional interlocutors and channels of communication. The first is CAABU, the Council for the Advancement of Arab British Understanding that has a triple chairmanship now from the three major parties: John Austin, Crispin Blunt and Colin Breed. The second is the Britain/Palestine all party parliamentary group, that was presided over first by Ernie Ross then by Dr. Phyllis Starkey and now by Richard Burden. Then we have the Labour Middle East Council, the Conservative Middle East Council-which was created by Lord Gilmour and Sir Dennis Walters, then was presided over by Nicholas Soames- and the Liberal Middle East Council that was presided over by Lord David Steel and now by Sir Menzies Campbell.

3. **Relations with political:** Parties take place throughout the year and each time I have a dignitary or a delegation, I make

sure that they meet the leadership of the opposition parties as well. But the busiest period is during the season of the annual party conferences in late September and early October. I usually have one or more fringe meetings. Those fringe meetings are extremely important because they help shape perceptions, policies, projections and predictions.

4. **The Diplomatic Corps:** In a lesser capital, relations within the Diplomatic Corps are more horizontal: a bridge club, a tennis players network, frequent gastronomic trips from The Hague to Brussels etc... Such leisurely pursuits are unthinkable in London. Because of the intensity of bilateral relations, the volume of visiting delegations, ministerial, parliamentary etc, the size of the community, relations are more of a vertical nature. But the Council of Arab Ambassadors remains an extremely important forum and the resulting joint activities are of great value. I have always drawn the attention of our British interlocutors to the exceptional importance of this Council composed "of former ministers and those who never wanted to be ministers".
5. **The Media:** Beside the importance of the British media and its pool of sophisticated and knowledgeable journalistic community and the heavy presence of international media outfits, London is also the media capital of the Arab world. It hosts all the Pan Arab dailies distributed from Morocco to Mascot, as well as many weeklies and monthlies, without forgetting the proliferating T.V. satellite stations many of whom were born in London or have their second most important offices located here.
6. **The N.G.O's:** This is the largest "layer" and to which I devoted much time. It includes Churches, trade unions, university campuses, think tanks, human rights institutions, solidarity groups etc... On the lecturing circuit, this is the most demanding category. To take the Churches as an example, I have had the privilege to address the Annual General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and of the United Reform Church, to lecture twice at Wesley Chapel of the Methodist Church, stayed regularly in touch with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Cardinal Head of the Roman Catholic Church.

7. **The Palestinian Community:** It might not be as big as our communities in the U.S.A., Chili, Canada, Australia or even Germany but it an extremely important community, concentrated mainly in the London area and is in more intense contact with the homeland and the region than other diaspora communities.

For example, because London is such an important Arab media center, we probably have here more than a 100 Palestinian journalists, second numerically only to Palestine itself. Throughout the years, many institutions were established in London. The Association of the Palestinian Community, of which I am the patron, has a constitution, a general assembly every two years, democratic elections and already 7 successive presidents. In addition, there are charities like Medical Aid for Palestinians MAP and Interpal or organisations dealing with lobbying and raising awareness like The Return Center or Arab Media Watch.

We the Palestinians, we have become the Jews of the Israelis and today, because of our geographic dispersal, we are "a global tribe". With the right approach, we could turn that into a source of empowerment.

8. **The Arab Community:** We dispose of no accurate figures because in the national census there is no such category for "Arabs" but "Muslims" and "Others". A conservative estimate would be of over 400.000 British - Arabs. Politically speaking it is still an invisible community, the last ethnic minority to be totally unrepresented in both Houses of Parliament. This is due to the a combination of factors: absence of any governmental encouragement and insufficient assertiveness by the community itself. The Arab Club and national associations are regular interlocutors of the Palestinian delegation.
9. **The Muslim Community:** Now close to 2 millions with already 5 members in the House of Lords and 4 elected members of the House of Commons. Their electoral weight is increasingly being felt. Since my arrival to London, I am in regular contact with the Union of Muslim Organisations U.M.O. and the Muslim Council of Britain M.C.B., lectured at the invitation of "City Circle" a network of second and third generation Muslims who work in the City....

- 10. The Jewish Community:** Wherever I happen to live or work, I devote a lot of time interacting with the Jewish community and many of its institutions. I have frequently lectured in the Liberal Synagogue in St John's Wood, always kept close relations with the Jewish Socialist Group, Jews for justice, friends of Mapam, friends of Peace Now, Neturai karta, etc... June Jacobs, Rabbi David Goldberg and many others are personal friends of both Christ'l and myself.

Some years ago, the Jewish Chronicle published, unaltered, a long letter of mine where I said: "I never compare the Palestinian Nakba/ Catastrophe to the Holocaust. Each tragedy stands on its own. I never indulge in comparative martyrology. If I were a Jew or a Gypsy, Nazi barbarity would be the most horrible event in History. If I were a Native American it would be the arrival of European settlers that resulted in almost total extermination. If I were a Black African, it would be slavery in previous centuries and Apartheid during last century. If I were an Armenian, it would be the Ottoman/Turkish massacres. If I were a Palestinian – and I happen to be one – it would be the Nakba. Humanity should condemn all the above. I do not know of a way to measure suffering or how to quantify pain but what I do know is that we are not children of a lesser God".

THE BROADER PICTURE: EVOLUTION OF EUROPEAN PERCEPTIONS

1948

European public perceptions of the Palestinian problem passed through a variety of phases. European anti-Semitism was decisive in the birth then the success of Zionism in Palestine. Without the "Dreyfus Affair" there would not have been Theodore Herzl's manifesto: "The Jewish State". Without Hitler's accession to power in the early 1930's and Nazi atrocities, Zionism would have remained a minority tendency within Jewish communities. Both Abba Eban and Nahum Goldman wrote in a variety of books that the "exceptional conditions" of the birth of Israel wouldn't have been possible without "the indulgence of the international community" as a result of the World War II. "Exceptional conditions" meant the atrocious conditions in which the majority in Palestine became the minority

and the minority a majority.

Alas the Palestinian dispossession and dispersion, the Nakba, took place with Europe... applauding. We were the victim of the victims of European history and were thus deprived of our legitimate share of sympathy, solidarity and support.

1956

I do not think that the tri-partite aggression against Egypt in 1956 made much of a fracture in the political establishment here in the U.K. Yes it shortened Anthony Eden's premiership. Yes, the late Lord Christopher Mayhew committed political harakiri when it was predicted that he had prime ministerial potential. Yes, the late writer Peter Mansfield resigned from the Foreign Office but there was no major crack in society. In France, its impact was by far more serious. Coupled with the impact of the Algerian independence movement, it helped terminate the 4th Republic and the political careers of Gaston Defferre and Guy Mollet, brought back de Gaulle to power in 1958 and thus contributed to the reorientation of French foreign policy.

1967

If one reads the book of Livia Rokach, the daughter of the first Mayor of Tel Aviv, on the Diaries of Moshe Sharett, one learns that Ben Gourion had two strategic doctrines. One was the periphery theory: since our environment is hostile, we have to make an alliance with the environment of our environment meaning Turkey, Iran and Ethiopia. The other doctrine could be summarised thus: we should know how to provoke the Arabs into provoking us so that we can expand beyond the narrow boundaries we have had to accept in 1948-49. That model applies perfectly to the escalating crisis that led to the 1967 war. General Matti Peled was known to have said: "believing that Israel was in danger in 1967 is an insult to the Israeli army".

1967 is important because Israel starts to be perceived as an occupier. The facilitation of mass Palestinian departures to get rid of undesirable demography, the illegal annexation of expanded East Jerusalem, the beginning of settlement building, all start to tarnish the Israeli image.

1973

That was an important strategic moment and undeniably a demarcation line. Europe (Pompidou/Jobert-Edward Heath) shows understanding towards the Arab military initiative to reawaken a dormant diplomatic front. The oil crisis that followed revealed the depth of interdependence, economic and on the security level between Europe and the Arab World and the risk of regional over-spills. The Euro-Arab dialogue is initiated and the need for an equitable solution for the Palestinian problem emphasized.

1977

The first electoral defeat by Labour in Israel liberates more segments of Western public opinion anesthetized by the soothing discourse of the labour leadership and their savoir-faire in matters of public relations. The raw discourse of Likud, their vociferous and vehement statements reflect better the reality of oppression. The Kibbutz movement, this "paradise on earth" used to seduce public opinion is discovered as a fading phenomenon that never represented more than 3% of society and of the Israeli economy anyway mainly built on confiscated Palestinian land. Under Israel, Palestine. A very stubborn Palestine indeed.

1982

The invasion of Lebanon was an eye-opener. An unprovoked war. Analysts said then that "it was a war out of choice not out of necessity" Many Jewish and Israeli writers announced "the end of the purity of arms".

1987

The first Palestinian Intifada. Mainly non violent coupled in 1988 with the P.L.O. peace initiative of a Two-State solution and ushers a new era in which the media starts to better balance its coverage giving more time and space to Palestinian spokespersons carrying our version of history.

MY TERM OF DUTY IN LONDON

Let me first say that London, for an Arab or a Palestinian diplomat, is an emotionally difficult posting, from the Balfour Declaration to the Gulf wars. Yet I have to commend all my interlocutors for their profound decency and extreme professionalism.

1990

I landed in town in September 1990 and it was not a soft landing coinciding with the first Gulf crisis and Saddam Hussain's occupation of Kuwait.

We were accused then to have bet on the wrong horse. My major concern was not to get politically marginalised. I detested Saddam, the occupation of Kuwait, the rapid deployment of foreign troops and the preparations for war. I kept my adherence to the diplomatic option that I favoured. On a David Frost Sunday programme I stated: "You have seen Yasser Arafat kiss the cheeks of Saddam but you did not bother to ask what he was whispering in his ear".

1991

With the end of the Gulf war, James Baker started his shuttle diplomacy. From London, we played an important role to project the image of the indivisible nature of the Palestinian people and of its national movement. In London several publicised meetings took place between P.L.O. officials, Palestinian personalities from the occupied territories and diaspora intellectuals like Edward Said and Ibrahim Abu Lughod. The British Government offered us facilitations so that Faisal Hussein and Hanan Ashrawi could "slip" through London to Tunis for consultations. My position was: the P.L.O. is, at the same time, an institution and an idea. If ten thousands work in the institution, the 9 million Palestinians are the powerful vehicle of the idea.

The P.L.O. has represented the Palestinian people for over 25 years. Now it will be the Palestinians representing the P.L.O. I frequently repeated then that the P.L.O. had become "unreasonably reasonable" having accepted that in the Madrid conference the Palestinians were "half a delegation, representing half the people seeking half a solution".

1992

While negotiations are stagnating in Washington, the Oslo process starts... in London. On the 2nd of December the steering committee of the Multilateral Talks held its meetings in London. Abu Ala'a was the coordinator of the Palestinian negotiating teams but could not-the P.L.O. was still excluded-attend himself. While the formal official event was taking place in Lancaster House, Abu Ala'a and myself met at the Ritz Hotel with Yair Hirshfield an assistant of Yossi Beilin, with Terry Larsen, the Norwegian, hovering on the sides.

1993

The Oslo breakthrough and the White House signature. History is in the making, I kept repeating. The specificity of the Palestinian situation: "a leadership in exile, a demography dispersed, a geography occupied" could move towards normality or the semblance of normality of "an authority over a demography over a geography".

1994

My application for "family reunification" in East Jerusalem submitted by a distant relative ...my mother, was rejected by the occupation authorities. I had planned to abandon politics and diplomacy and start an English weekly in Jerusalem: "The Palestinian". The beginning of disenchantment with the peace process. My message was : Israel seeks a diplomatic outcome that would reflect:

- 1- Israeli power and intransigence,
- 2- The American constant alignment on the Israeli preference,
- 3- Russian decline,
- 4- European abdication,
- 5- Arab impotence,
- 6- and what they hope to be Palestinian resignation.

My advice was: do not confuse realism with resignation.

1995

All Palestinian factions abide to an unproclaimed cease-fire. Assassination of Rabin by a Jewish extremist. The Israeli government provokes the Islamic tendencies by the assassination of Shikaki in Malta and the "Engineer" in Gaza.

1996

Successful Palestinian Presidential and legislative elections. Retaliation of the Islamic tendencies in response to Israeli assassination policy. Peres wages war in Lebanon ending with the Kana massacre. "Retaliation" of the Palestinian Israeli voters through abstention and election of Netanyahu whom I described as "a pyromaniac on a power keg". My lectures are often titled: "From breakthrough to breakdown?". Still then followed by a question mark.

1997

Diplomatic stagnation. Instead of a permanent peace we live through the farce of a durable... peace process.

1998

Three meetings between President Arafat and Madeleine Albright in London. Increasing irritation of the American administration with Netanyahu's rigidity. His damaging of American-Israeli relations is one of the factors that lead in 1999 to his electoral defeat opposite Barak.

1999

Barak a monumental disappointment. A complex individual, he rapidly alienated his colleagues within Labour and antagonised his coalition partners. Freezes the Palestinian track and flirts with the Syrian track.

2000

Barak wants to over jump the interim phases and move directly to final status talks. Arafat makes known that he believes that to be premature because insufficient home work was done. The American side restricted itself to convey to us Israeli proposals. David Aaron Miller, in a recent candid op-ed in *The Washington Post*-titled: "Israel's lawyer"-writes that had the American side presented the "Clinton Parameters" in Camp David in July rather than, too late, in December, we would have had an agreement then. The failure of Camp David heightens tensions. The provocative Sharon visit to the Dome of the Rock ignites the situation. The Mitchell report, some

time later, admits that the second Intifada started by being non-violent and that the ferocious repression by the Israeli side, causing more than a hundred fatalities the first two weeks, pushed a few on our side to resort, unwisely, to using arms.

2001-2002

In the internal debate, I lobby for a unilateral Palestinian cease-fire. Clinically, I believe that the Israelis should be aware that they cannot terminate the Intifada and that we should be aware that, by the Intifada alone, we cannot terminate the occupation. There is a need for a diplomatic initiative.

2002

The Diplomatic initiative occurs when the Beirut Arab Summit adopts the Saudi peace initiative. It is, alas, followed by a Hamas suicide bombing in Netanya. Sharon, offered a choice between reciprocating to a diplomatic overture or retaliating to a military provocation, chooses the latter. The world suffering from self-inflicted impotence, watches the reinvasion of the already occupied territories. The Nakba is definitely not a frozen moment in history that has occurred sometime in 1948!

2003

The previous September, Tony Blair, at the Labour annual conference, is very warmly applauded when he announces that he will convene an international conference to help resolve the conflict. The conference convened turns out to be more modest than expected: "on Palestinian reforms". Even that displeases Sharon who tries to sabotage the London gathering by preventing Palestinian ministers from travelling. Fortunately modern technology and video-conferencing salvage the day. Here in London, I have to carry the burden. The Message: "Reforms, meritocracy, transparency, accountability are not conditions to be imposed on us by the outside world. They are a Palestinian expectation, aspiration, a right and even a duty. Yet I warn: the issue of Palestinian reforms should not be the tree that hides the forest and in this case the forest is an ugly spectacle of occupation and oppression.

2004

Again, during the Labour party conference end of September, Tony Blair gets the loudest applause for his passage "Come November.... I will make it my personal priority..." I have, since then, often invoked this Blair speech to prove that Yasser Arafat was not the obstacle to peace. End of September, Arafat was not dead. He was not even ill. By "Come November", Tony Blair meant when we have the American presidential elections behind us.

2005

With the disappearance of the founder of the contemporary Palestinian national movement, I frequently refer to Max Weber who spoke of the phases of leadership and legitimacy:

- 1- The traditional phase,
- 2- The charismatic phase,
- 3- The institutional phase.

The successful presidential elections, competitive and internationally monitored is a good omen for the future. Having witnessed the end of the charismatic era, a managerial revolution should now be on the agenda. We all know Sharon's intentions. How the world and the Quartet will carry the peace process beyond the unilateral Israeli disengagement from Gaza remains to be seen.

IN CONCLUSION

We have an excellent working relationship with Her Majesty's Government and with the entire political establishment. In Parliament, it is the pro-Israeli lobby which is on the defensive, more comfortable in supporting an Israel run by Labour rather than by the internationally embarrassing Likoud. All opinion polls in Britain, but also across Europe, show that the trend is overwhelmingly in favour of ending the Israeli occupation that has started in 1967 and the establishment of a Palestinian State. It is no

more a left wing phenomenon but we also enjoy comfortable majorities among the voters of the Liberals and the Conservative parties. Unlike 1973, when European Governmental positions were more advanced than their public opinions, today public opinions are more sensitive and supportive of Palestinian aspirations than their governments. The future looks promising. It is no more politically suicidal to be pro-Palestinian. It is no more electorally rewarding to be anti-Palestinian. Quite the opposite.

7

THOSE WERE THE DAYS*

Ladies & Gentlemen

Of the many duties I have had to undertake here in London during the last four years, your invitation today will probably be the one I will remember, in the future, with the greatest tenderness and affection.

Having been successively, some two decades ago, president of both the Belgian, then the French, sections of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS), your invitation has plunged me in nostalgic recollections of what is supposed to have been the golden age of the international student movement: from Berkeley to Belgium and Berlin, from Paris to Prague.

Those were the days, my friends, when we reinvented the world and the future almost every day. Voracious readers, we used to engage in sleepless nights and endless talk about the ideal society. Some of us were ready to die in bringing about their ideals. Others wanted simply to live them. Schools of thought proliferated and they all revolved around the idea of social change and - yes, already then - a new international system. Some thought change in the centre would be decisive while others considered changes in the periphery to be the recommended course of action. Some regarded the working classes in the industrialised nations to be the major agents of change while others looked upon the peasantry of the Third World as the vehicle of social transformation. Some argued that the State, which had to become a neutral body based on meritocracy, will assume this function by being the guarantor, the regulator and the redistributor within society while Herbert

* *Speech delivered on the occasion of the inaugural session of the Global Festival celebrating the Centenary Year of The London School of Economics at the invitation of the Student Union - Monday, 6th February 1995*

Marcuse, one of my generation's favorite authors flattered our egos with his theory that in our contemporary society, where we witness the embourgeoisement of the proletariat and the continuing conservatism of the peasantry, students, and only the students, were the sole agent of the desirable change. Students, those future intellectuals, were a topic Antonio Gramsci had addressed with great eloquence. Advocating a special relationship between the oppressed and the intelligentsia he called for "an alliance between those who think because they suffer and those who suffer because they think".

So we thought and thought and I am sure that our elders must have suffered when hearing us think aloud. But that is altogether another story.

Our slogans then reflected "L'air du temps":

— "l'imagination au pouvoir".

— "le droit à la différence". The right to be different.

— "il est interdit d'interdire". It is forbidden to forbid.

A favorite among many was:

"Le droit à la paresse". The right to be lazy, which incidentally referred to the legitimacy and desirability of general strikes rather than the appealing notion of *dolce vita* based on *fare niente*.

"Il faut s'occuper de la politique sinon la politique s'occupera de vous". You should take care of politics or else politics will take care of you.

And the last that I will quote.

"Politics is too important to be left to politicians".

Each of us had his or her heroes and *maitre(s) à penser*. Some became dogmatic and doctrinaire. But great intellectual diversity and tolerance was the major feature of those times. I was, what we used then to call, electric, belonged to no chapel, no clique or clan. Because of my historical and sociological background, Jesus and Mohammed had undeniable influence on my intellectual upbringing. The principles of "liberté-fraternité-égalité" and the French Revolution itself had exercised a great fascination on me. As a Palestinian who favoured Arab unity, I showed an early interest in Bismarck, Cavour and Garihaldi, Jamal Abdel Nasser but also in Jean Monnet. I read Marx, in depth, and never became a Marxist myself yet had often to protect him from frequent misinterpretations, distortions and mutilations of some of his disciples just as many of us have frequently to proclaim God's innocence of beliefs and behaviours perpetrated on His/Her behalf. Let us not forget that Jewish fundamentalists have transformed God into some sort of real estate agent.

I devoted much time to Lenin and Mao, finishing an MA thesis in the very Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium, in fact the oldest Catholic University in the world established in 1425 - on "Revolutionary strategies and the conquest of power, a comparative study of the Bolshevik and Maoist revolutions", yet had a special weakness towards those who encountered a tragic fate: Che Guevara, J.F.K. and Martin Luther King, or were maltreated by History and by their contemporaries: Leon Trotsky or had conquered power only to abandon it voluntarily: Emiliano Zapata.

To add to the irritation of some of my friends, I remained totally unsecluded and unmoved by the Chinese cultural revolution and openly preferred Chou en lai the State-builder, the technocrat to the unattractive and constantly intriguing manipulative agitator Lin Piao.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this list would be incomplete if I were to omit my obsession with and observation of De Gaulle, this Western leader that Stanley Hoffman had called "un artiste de la politique". He had had to struggle, brilliantly, against foes and friends alike to maintain the rank of France undiminished after its devastating defeat in 1940. The analogy with the Palestinian re-emerging national movement would not have escaped you. His tumultuous relationship with that other giant - Winston Churchill - would keep me awake night after night. Churchill had summerised this complex rapport by saying: "of the many crosses I have had to carry, the Cross of Lorraine was surely the heaviest". (The Cross of Lorraine being, of course, the symbol of the French Resistance). Again, regional analogies were obvious.

My fascination with De Gaulle was responsible for some of my most tormenting moments. I was, then, in total solidarity with the French student movement but this movement was irreparably destabilising De Gaulle. Anyway, even his abdication was done with such grandeur that his place in history - undiminished and unstained - was preserved for posterity.

In 1972, I moved from Belgium to the Institute d'Etudes Politiques in Paris and got involved in discussions on the nature and the scope of Political Science itself. Some of you present here today would remember that as a relatively new discipline Political Science was still struggling to assert itself and its domaine. So we still called it then "Political Sciences", in the plural, seeing it as a sort of interdisciplinary field, it is true dealing with the study of the State, of Government and of power in general, but encompassing History, International Relations, Sociology and Economics with very unclear demarcation lines. In Anglo Saxon countries they had no problem describing students of and experts in political science: a political scientist, but in the

French speaking world even that was subject for debate and dissent. Some called him/her a “politiste”, others preferred “politicologue”. The jokers would simply say “les sciences poseurs”.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this was the flavor of those times. We were then young and audacious, questioning everything and everyone. We were the world “en miniature” with an experimental “global village” mentality. We were one, yet, in every sense, plural. We shared values and dreams and were endeavoring hard to reconcile our respective cultural authenticities with what we thought was modernity, to reconcile our respective political specificities with what we hoped was universality. Universality for us was surely not the American way of life or Western hegemony but an elusive and yet to be defined constellation of ideas and values enriched by the many inputs of every culture and civilisation. I am sure that the quest for “that universality” still goes on today in this university and elsewhere too.

Yes, we were one and plural: proud nationalists, profoundly internationalists, totally cosmopolitan. With the student movement on the ascendency, catalysed by the Vietnamese tragedy, the 1967 war took place in the Middle East resulting in the humiliating defeat of the Arab armies and the Palestinian reawakening. Israel, in a continuing process of elastic expansion, dispossession and dispersion, occupied East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in addition to the Sinai and the Golan. A whole generation of Palestinian students were trapped abroad and when Israel conducted a demographic census, we all became legally non-existent. This student community became the new wandering Palestinians. Many of us were already active in resurrecting the Palestinian National Movement around Yasser Arafat and his colleagues. Now most joined in, becoming a major affluent within the PLO.

Already in those days many of our friends were Jews. They were anti-Zionists or non Zionists. The West, then, was a cemetery for those in politics, in the media or in academia who dared question Israel’s intentions or dare condemn its politics and practices. Reputations were ruined, careers were shattered and character assassination was the name of the game. Israel felt immune to criticism and the most unacceptable intellectual terrorism prevailed, as a powerful deterrent. Philippe de St Robert wrote that he received a letter from one of his readers saying “you are an objective writer but when Israel is concerned impartiality is unwelcomed”. So some of the best critical books or articles were then mainly written by Jewish scholars. But even they would not escape insults and abuse. “Self-hating Jews” would be one of the mildest. The most radical among them would question the

very legitimacy of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine while the more moderate believed that the creation of a Palestinian State was a Jewish moral obligation, a Jewish ethical responsibility. I still remember, with enormous political gratitude. Rabbi Elmer Berger, Alfred Lilienthal of "What price Israel?" and of course Naom Chomsky in the USA. In Belgium, Marcel Liebeman and Nathan Wienstock. In France Ania Francos, Ilan Halevy and Maxime Rodinson and what was then the highly needed eye-opener in intellectual circles his "Israel: a colonial settler State". In the UK, Eli Lobel. Moshe Machover, Uri Davis and Isaac Deutscher. Deutscher in his criticism of the "Prussians of the Middle East" offered a parable of his own to make comprehensible the human dimensions of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Putting aside the calculations of politicians and the machinations of states, he said that this conflict was between a person who had to jump from a building on fire but landed on another person whose back he broke. Each time the second person moaned in pain or tried to stand up again, he would receive a beating for fear of revenge or claims for compensation.

A prominent French Jewish intellectual visited Israel during those years and returned profoundly disturbed by the arrogance and the macho military mentality he encountered. I will never forget his remark then: "These Israelis are no more Jews".

"These Israelis are no more Jews", an interesting statement that deserves one day some further elaboration.

Ladies and Gentlemen, rightly or wrongly, we were then considered a generation of adorable or of exasperating dreamers. Rightly or wrongly, the generations who followed were perceived as more disciplined, more career-orientated. But there were a few exceptions, among others the Palestinian students of the West Bank and Gaza who played a leading role during the first years of the Intifada. They were models of self sacrifice to whom the entire nation is eternally indebted.

Some decades ago, Daniel Bell followed by Raymond Aron predicted "the end of ideologies". Years later, the end of history itself was announced to which Andre Fontaine, in a beautifully worded article in *Le Monde*, responded by saying: "if it is true that we witness the end of history, then we are living the beginning of boredom".

The way you have decided to celebrate the 100th anniversary of your Alma Mater, the theme Globalism that you have chosen for the centenary festival, proves that we are not, definitely not, witnessing the end of idealism.



3 4204 00033 5404

Afif Safieh was born in Jerusalem in 1950. He has served as Palestinian General Delegate to the Netherlands (1987-1990), to the United Kingdom (1990-2005) and to the Holy See-Vatican (1995-2005) before his transfer to Washington as Head of the PLO Mission to the United States since November 2005.



Afif Safieh, in September 1980, received in a private audience, as Special Presidential Envoy, by His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

**PLO Mission
to the United States of America**

1320 18th Street, NW, Suite # 200,
Washington, DC 20036
E-mail: plomission1@aol.com
Website: www.plomission.us

A Supplement to the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs

