



THE PALESTINE PROBLEM: AN OVERVIEW

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History, of course, is written by the victorious. And every protagonist in history has wanted to hug the moral high ground. But *Veritas* is an elusive quarry, and it looks different to the Maharajah on the elephant than to the footman walking behind. Freedom for the pike is death for the minnow. To the sheep led to slaughter, animal rights is humbug.

I do not look back to incriminate or delegitimize. How things are perceived on the other side of the hill not only helps in understanding actions and reactions, fears and transgressions, but also in the assessment of the parameters of an honorable solution.

I

The crux and the kernel of the Arab-Israeli conflict is the Palestine Problem. The Arab-Israeli interstate conflict is derivative from the non-resolution of the Palestine Problem. The crux and kernel of the Palestine Problem is the struggle between two national movements: on the one hand, the Zionist movement (and, since 1948, its embodiment, Israel), and on the other, the Palestinian national movement. The crux and kernel of this struggle has

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been, and continues to this day to be, the issue of the control or sharing of the land of Palestine.

The earliest stirrings of Zionism as a modern political movement occurred in Russia in the 1880s. But the movement began in earnest in 1897 when the Hungarian Jewish leader Theodor Herzl convened the first Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland. Thirty-one Zionist Congresses have been held since then, the latest in Jerusalem in 1987. The first Zionist Congress was attended by 196 delegates, mostly from Eastern Europe. Only four of the 196 delegates were Jews from Palestine. The first Zionist Congress established the World Zionist Organization (WZO), which functions to this day. For the last four decades, one-third of its delegates have come from the American Jewish community.

Zionism was a reaction to the twin challenges to Jewish identity of assimilation by the Christian European environment and persecution by the Christian European environment. In the all-pervasive nationalist climate of nineteenth-century Europe, Zionism was also a positive assertion of Jewish national identity. Its *modus operandi* of massive emigration and land acquisition overseas and its colonization program were in keeping with the policies of the European colonial powers of the time. Its aim, as embodied in the Basle Program adopted by the first Zionist Congress, was to "establish a home for the Jews in Palestine." This "home"—euphemism for a state—was to be established through massive immigration, land acquisition, and colonization.

The problem Zionism faced in Palestine was that Palestine was an inhabited country. At the time of the Basle Program in 1897, the local Jewish community constituted less than 7 percent of the total population of the land. The rest of the population, 93 percent, were Arab in language, culture, and collective historical memory. Some 88 percent of these were Muslim, the remaining Christian.

The Muslim Arabs had wrested Palestine from Byzantium, in A.D. 637, with the help of disaffected Christian Arabs — for Arabs had begun to settle Palestine long before the Muslim conquest. This was some 400 years before the Norman conquest of Britain, 100 years before the birth of Charlemagne, and 1000 years before the *Mayflower* touched the shores of the American continent. The Palestinians of today claim descent, not only from their forebears who defeated Byzantium, but also from the people who inhabited Palestine under Byzantium. These in turn were the descendants, ethnic layer upon ethnic layer and generation upon generation, of all previous inhabitants of the land, including the ancient Hebrews and their precursors. In other words, in Palestinian eyes, Palestinian birthright to their country, Palestine, was as pristine as the birthright of any people in their own country.

To the West, the Zionist argument deriving from Divine Law is eminently plausible, but to the Palestinians, if Jehovah meant to give present-day Palestine to the Jews, then Allah did not. To the West, the Zionist argument from Natural Law, based on the Jewish need, is eminently plausible, but if Natural

Law said the Jews had a greater need for Palestine than the Palestinians themselves, then Palestinians have serious problems with this proposition. Palestinians did not and do not deny the historical and spiritual connection between the Jews and Palestine. What they could not and cannot endorse is that after a lapse of 2000 years, contemporary Jews anywhere have an overriding political right in Palestine which negates, supersedes, and annuls the political rights of the Palestinians in their own homeland.

From the early 1880s, and certainly after the Basle Program, the Palestinians saw in the Zionists a potential dispossessor, displacer, and replacer. They saw in the Basle Program an implicit delegitimization of Palestinian rights, and answered delegitimization with counter-delegitimization—an attitude which they maintained until the early 1970s.

The dilemma facing the Zionist founding fathers was monumental. How does one establish a national home in a country that is already the national home of another politically conscious people, particularly at a time when the Zionist movement had no military power? The strategy actually adopted after 1897 was to search, over the heads of the Palestinian population, for a powerful sponsor who would afford the Zionist venture the political and military protection it needed during its formative phase. The premises of this strategy were that:

- (a) The Basle Program was to be implemented in spite of the presence and opposition of the Palestinian population;
- (b) Palestinian consent was not a necessary prerequisite; and
- (c) In the last analysis, force could be exerted through the powerful sponsor.

Thus the genesis of the Palestine Problem does not date to 1948 when the Palestinians and Arabs rejected the establishment of Israel. Nor does it date to the rise of the Third Reich, though this accelerated the rate of Jewish immigration into Palestine. Nor does it date to the rise of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the mid-1960s. It historically dates back to the Basle Program of 1897.

Palestinians have been on the *strategic defensive* ever since, though they have often been on the *tactical offensive*. From the Palestinian perspective, the historical record shows that it was the Zionist movement that challenged the demographic, cultural, social, and political status quo that prevailed in Palestine at the turn of the century, with all the consequences that flowed and are still flowing from that challenge to the present day.

Zionist colonization has taken place in two major phases: the first was from 1918 to 1948; the second, after a hiatus of nearly twenty years, began in 1967 and is still going today. Zionist colonization actually precedes 1918 and had its beginnings in the early 1880s, but the Zionist program became viable only with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and its post-World War I sponsorship by Britain, the paramount imperial power of the day.

It was under British protection and by the force of British arms that during the first phase, from 1918 to 1948, the demographic, economic, military, and

organizational infrastructure of the future Jewish state was laid, at the expense of the indigenous Palestinian people and in the teeth of their resistance. It was during this first phase that the balance of power between the indigenous Palestinian population and the Jewish immigrant population slowly but relentlessly shifted in favor of the latter.

At the end of this first phase, the Jews were still in the minority (only one-third of the population) despite massive immigration, and owned no more than 7 percent of the land. But the Jews had an inherent qualitative superiority over the indigenous Palestinian population. They were a Western, industrialized, socialistic, centrally controlled, highly mobilizable urban community led by an efficient, dedicated managerial elite supremely confident in its capacity to change the natural order of things. The leadership also had access to the talents and resources of the Jewish diaspora, and to its political clout in the metropolitan centers of the West.

Facing the Jewish community was a decentralized, pre-industrial, predominantly rural society led by a traditional, relaxed, patrician, urban elite supremely but naively confident in the irreversibility of the natural order of things. This leadership had no institutional links to the neighboring Arab capitals, which themselves were struggling under various forms of Western tutelage. By the end of this first phase, Britain had in effect become a buffer between the two communities.

But Britain had also by that time become superfluous to Zionist purposes. The Zionist leadership now brought tremendous pressures to bear on Britain psychologically, diplomatically, and militarily. Unable to hit back in the wake of the Holocaust with the same force it had employed against the Palestinians, its sense of imperial mission having been drained by the war, Britain referred the Palestine question to the UN as a prelude to its own shabby withdrawal from the country.

An extraordinarily fleeting convergence of interest between Washington and Moscow produced a UN resolution in November 1947 to partition the country into a Jewish and an Arab state against unanimous Palestinian and Arab opposition. To the contemporaneous Palestinian and Arab leadership, partition was no compromise. The resolution did not say to the two principal protagonists: "Each side will keep what it has or the bulk of it with reciprocal exchanges." It said to the Zionists: "You will increase what you have 8-fold (from 7 percent to 55 percent of the country)." It said to the Palestinians: "You yield 45 percent of what you have and let one-third of your population live as a permanent minority under alien rule." In a word, if to the Zionists partition was more than half a loaf, to the Palestinians it was less than half a baby.

With the British smartly departing the country to get out of the way, the Zionists were determined to implement partition by force and the Palestinians were equally determined to resist. There followed two wars: A civil war largely between the Jewish community and the Palestinian community before the end of the British mandate on 15 May 1948; and a regular war

after 15 May between Israel (established on that date) and units of the regular Arab armies. In the civil war, the Palestinian community was pulverized and routed. It was during the civil war that the Palestinian Exodus giving rise to the Palestinian Diaspora began. The Arab armies intervened ineffectively, too late, and in reaction to the rout of the Palestinians.

The upshot of the two wars was the conquest by Israel of 77 percent of the country, the creation of 750,000 Palestinian refugees (60 percent of the population), the fall of ten major Palestinian towns or mixed townships with all their assets, the occupation and total destruction of 416 Palestinian villages, and the seizure of all their lands.

The *Nakba*, or "Catastrophe," as the wars of 1948 have been dubbed by the Arabs, sent shock waves throughout the region, adding the Arab-Israeli interstate dimension to the local conflict. On this, a Cold War dimension was superimposed when the radicalized Arab countries turned to Moscow to balance Western support of Israel.

The twenty-year hiatus after the first phase of Zionist colonization ended with the June 1967 war. During this period, no progress was made to address Palestinian grievances and suffering because of international indifference, Arab disarray, the Cold War, Israel's solipsistic refusal to accept any responsibility for the fate of the Palestinians, and the Arab countries' inability to face the new realities.

During the June war, Israel succeeded in conquering Sinai and the Golan, thus deepening the interstate conflict with the Arab countries. But it also succeeded in conquering the rump of Palestinian territory not incorporated in Israel in 1948: East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, thus taking over 100 percent of historical Palestine.

Their humiliating defeat, combined with the loss of their own territories, caused the Arab countries to harden their posture concerning negotiations with or recognition of Israel. Using this as a pretext, Israel launched the second major phase of colonization of Palestinian territory, as though the only moral to be derived from all that had gone before was that what was needed was more colonization. This second phase, starting with 1967 and still continuing, is a repeat performance of the process that had caused the Palestine Problem (and its derivative, the Arab-Israeli conflict) in the first place—except that in this second phase (unlike the first when Britain was a buffer of sorts) Israel is in total control and the Palestinians are hostage to all the administrative, legalistic, and military measures that Israel sees fit to take.

In what were to become the occupied territories (East Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip), there had been before 1948 some seven Jewish settlements, and Jewish land ownership constituted at most 1 percent of the total area. The pre-1948 Jewish population of these territories was at the utmost 5,000, including East Jerusalem. After the twenty-three years of colonization since 1967,

- East Jerusalem, its surface area almost doubled, has been formally annexed to Israel;
- 120,000 Israelis now live in East Jerusalem;
- 165 Israeli settlements have been established in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, with a total population of 93,000 Jews outside East Jerusalem;
- 55 percent of the lands of the West Bank and 42 percent of those of the Gaza Strip have been confiscated or otherwise alienated from Palestinian ownership;
- Palestinian construction is barred on 68 percent of the West Bank; and
- All the water resources of the occupied territories are under Israeli control—the bulk being diverted to the needs of Israel or of Israeli settlers in the occupied territories.

Looming over all this is the dark shadow of a million Soviet Jews expected in the next two to three years to press further on the finite water and land resources of Israel and the occupied territories. As early as 1983, the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture and the Settlement Department of the World Zionist Organization prepared a Master Plan for the year 2010, envisaging the expenditure of \$2.6 billion for the settlement of 800,000 Jews in the West Bank alone. Whence the wherewithal for all this? Grants from the U.S. government to Israel for the period from 1952 to 1989 totalled \$53 billion. Direct grants from the U.S. to the Palestinians of the occupied territories have averaged \$7.4 million per annum in the last decade.

It is this background that partly explains the causes of the latest Palestinian uprising, the intifada, which began in 1987, and the Palestinian reactions to the Gulf Crisis.

II

Notwithstanding, the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization committed a major error in not distancing itself from Saddam Hussein. The leadership should have repeatedly, forcefully, and publicly condemned his rape of Kuwait. That it did not is a measure of its utter disillusionment with the U.S., particularly after the suspension by Washington of its dialogue with the PLO. But this is no explanation, much less a justification.

However, contrary to the general impression in the West, the PLO is a predominantly civilian organization. Its backbone is a network of Palestinian professional unions, some of which date back to the early 1920s. There are separate unions for students, women, workers, teachers, engineers, doctors and pharmacists, writers and journalists, artists, farmers, and lawyers. Their total membership is in the hundreds of thousands. The unions are represented in the Palestinian parliament, the Palestine National Council (PNC), which has a membership of 600. About a third of this membership is allocated to the occupied territories, but the delegates are not allowed by Israel to attend. The mainstream guerrilla groups in the PNC constitute only 13.4

percent of this body. The largest political organization in the PLO is Fateh, led by Yasir Arafat.

The PLO was founded by the Arab states in 1964 towards the end of the hiatus between the two major phases of Zionist colonization. Its charter was drawn up by a lawyer who argued, legalistically, that since Zionism delegitimized the Palestinians, then the charter considered Zionism and Israel delegitimized and the UN partition resolution null and void. The charter, in the new circumstances, was maximalist and unrealistic and aimed at the total liberation of Palestine.

Indeed, the very creation of the PLO reflected the Palestinian shift in orientation from a Pan-Arab to a more particularistic self-image. This shift in itself was an indication of loss of faith in the ability of the Arab countries to help the Palestinian cause. The mood embodied by this shift was more militantly represented by the concurrent rise in the mid-1960s of the Palestinian guerrilla movement led by Arafat, which soon captured the leadership of the PLO.

The guerrilla movement amended the PLO charter specifically to include armed struggle as the only means of liberation. The guerrilla movement argued that Palestine was not on the agenda of the international community nor, for that matter, on that of any of the Arab countries, and that there was no alternative to auto-emancipation for placing it on the agenda. It argued that the Palestinians had to take matters in their own hands, and through guerrilla operations, force the Arab countries kicking and screaming into a military confrontation with Israel.

Palestinian guerrilla operations in the years 1965 to 1967 had little military impact on Israel, but were catalytic in creating the atmosphere that led to the 1967 war. The guerrilla strategy drew its inspiration from the success of the Algerian revolution against French occupation, as well as from the war in Vietnam. But its strategy was intrinsically flawed. It did not recognize the extent of the irrelevance of both the Algerian and Vietnamese analogies. At the heart of the guerrilla strategy was the concept of a putative Arab Hanoi. But there could be no such Hanoi because of Israel's massive retaliation policy against the Arab countries "hosting" the PLO. The Palestinian attempt to secure an Arab Hanoi or to operate on the assumption that the Arab host country in question was one, ineluctably led to conflict with the host government, whether Jordan, Lebanon, or Syria.

The PLO under the leadership of Arafat began from the early 1970s to undergo a slow, agonizing, but cumulative learning process in the face of these realities. This process is distinctly discernible in the resolutions taken by the successive PNCs, of which there have been twenty since the first was held in 1964. These resolutions show an evolutionary process in the reformulation of the objectives of the PLO, away from total liberation, and in their reformulation of the means for attaining these objectives, away from exclusive reliance on the armed struggle.

The process has been slow but steady, patterned, and linear. It is all the more remarkable because of the obstacles that had to be overcome or bypassed: the monumental psychological barriers to yielding on deeply ingrained historical convictions, the absence of Israeli reciprocity, the fierce opposition of Palestinian ideological rejectionists, the indifference and debunking by the U.S. of the Palestinian groping towards moderation, and the hostility of Arab radical regimes anxious to maintain in their hands the so-called Palestine "card."

On the issue of objectives, total liberation in the PNC resolutions was replaced in succession by concepts of "a unitary democratic non-discriminatory secular state" to include Palestinians and the Jews of Israel, the liberation of "any part of Palestine as an interim stage," the setting up of "a Palestinian authority on any part to be liberated," the creation of an "entity on any part liberated," still as an interim stage, the creation of "a Palestinian state within the 1967 frontiers," and finally, at the Algiers PNC in November 1988, the formal explicit mention of a "two-state solution" as a *point finale* based, ironically, on the legitimacy for both the Palestinian and Jewish states of the UN partition plan of 1947.

Similarly, on the issue of the means, the movement has moved from exclusive reliance on "armed struggle" to armed struggle as an "aid to diplomacy," and finally, to diplomacy alone with no mention of the armed struggle, as at the Algiers 1988 PNC. The shift is, unmistakably, 180 degrees.

III

None of this made any impression on successive Israeli governments. Indeed, the more moderate the PLO became, the more the Israeli governments seemed to escalate the colonization of the occupied territories.

Shamir's policy could be said to have three pillars:

- *First*, a conviction that the U.S. lacks the will or ability to pressure Israel effectively, whatever Washington's verbal stance might be;
- *Second*, adamant refusal to yield an inch of territory; and
- *Third*, adamant denial of Palestinian peoplehood.

Shamir seems to believe that he has taken the measure of Washington. After he had led Secretary Baker up the garden path over his own elections plan for almost a year during 1989, an infuriated Baker announced the suspension of talks with Shamir. He also angrily announced his telephone number, thinking he was throwing down the gauntlet to Shamir. What Baker seemed to overlook was that this was music to Shamir's ears. Shamir virtually willed Baker to go into a sulk.

Let there be no mistake: When Shamir says, "not one inch of territory," he is being as sincere as a devout Muslim attesting that Muhammad is the Prophet of God. This tenet is absolutely central for Shamir and the Israeli Likud party which Shamir leads. It is cast in concrete. It is moored in the

bedrock of Vladimir Jabotinsky's Revisionist Zionism, of which Shamir sees himself as the last apostle.

Ideology, not religion, and much less security, is the fountainhead of the Likud's thinking. Shamir's triumphalism is not only over Palestinians and Arabs, but equally over Labor Zionism, with which Revisionist Zionism has contended for the leadership of Zion since the 1920s.

To be sure, Theodor Herzl founded Zionism, Chaim Weizmann secured the Balfour Declaration, David Ben-Gurion established Israel within 77 percent of Palestine, and Menachem Begin militarily neutralized Egypt. But in his self-image, it is Shamir who will join the Zionist pantheon as the one who secured Greater Israel.

Shamir's argument that he cannot deal with the PLO because the PLO is terrorist at least attests to his sense of humor. His rejection of the PLO springs from his territorial tenet. The PLO represents a peoplehood. This people lives in the occupied territories and in the Palestinian Diaspora. Talking to the PLO is accepting the existence of this peoplehood both inside and outside the occupied territories. It is getting into contact with the national and historical rights of the Palestinian people. It is opening the Pandora's box of territorial solutions.

Shamir's elections proposal of 1989 for the Palestinians of the occupied territories involved functions of limited autonomy in a territorial vacuum. Being confined to the residents of the occupied territories, they enshrine Israeli repudiation of all responsibility for the Palestinians of the Diaspora and formal denial of Palestinian peoplehood.

Already after the Gulf War, Washington seems to be moving along another garden path landscaped by Shamir: direct bilateral interstate negotiations between Israel and the Arab countries on normalization of relations. This ignores that the interstate conflict is derivative from the non-resolution of the Palestinian Problem, and that Anwar Sadats do not grow on the trees of the Levant.

Operationally, Shamir's concept is designed not only to outflank the Palestinian issue, but to extend the "not-one-inch" doctrine to the Golan Heights. When a minister in Shamir's cabinet recently implied in Washington that the Golan was negotiable, Shamir explained "what the minister meant to say was that if there are negotiations with Israel, they [the Syrians] will meet and can say to us: 'We want the Golan,' and we will say: 'We won't give them to you.' That's negotiations."^{*}

The most precious commodity Shamir is after is time. He seeks this commodity with the avidity with which Spanish conquistadors sought gold in the New World. He is not asking for much time, just three or four years—enough to bring in one million Soviet Jews. Hence his alternative garden

^{*} *Boston Globe*, 19 March 1991.

paths, the elections plan and bilateral negotiations. He hopes in this way to assign the Palestinian Problem to the dustbin of history.

What he is uncaringly sowing, as we approach the end of the millennium, are the seeds of an Armageddon fought by fundamentalists on both sides.

IV

Will not a Palestinian state in the occupied territories such as the present generation of Palestinians is now willing to accept pose an unacceptable security threat to Israel?

I believe a Palestinian state can be devised in a way that would be totally compatible with Israel's security. The rock on which this state would be built would be its weakness, not its strength. Its defense would not be in its hands, since no defense establishment it could build could possibly match Israel's crushing military preponderance. The defense of this Palestinian state would therefore be based solely on international guarantees. In a word, it would be a voluntarily demilitarized state in its own self-interest and contractually, except for the requirements of internal security.

The demilitarized regime would be monitored by international observers, and by regular and unannounced on-site inspections. The state would commit itself à la Austria not to enter into any military alliance or arrangement with any Arab or non-Arab country. It would have no defense installations on its borders with Israel. A multinational force would be stationed in it for ten-year renewable periods: to act as trip wire along the Jordan River so as to deter any hostile move from the east; to police the border with Israel against infiltration into Israel; and to act as a strategic reserve to help the Palestinian state against radical Palestinian elements and to move against any radical Palestinian takeover of the state.

The treaty between the Palestinian state and Israel would be endorsed by the Arab League and guaranteed by the superpowers. Violation of the treaty would be subject to sanctions and, if necessary, to international military collective action.

The demilitarized regime would be politically reinforced by some federal/confederal arrangement with the moderate monarchical regime in Amman, the maintenance of which would be an essential component of the plan. The demilitarized regime would be economically reinforced by economic treaties and arrangements with Israel which could be developed empirically toward a full economic union between Israel and the Palestinian/Jordanian federation/confederation.

V

The Gulf War has negative and positive implications with regard to the resolution of the Palestine Problem and the Arab-Israeli conflict. But its technical implications underline the irrelevance of the retention of the occupied territories for Israel's security. The negative implications for the general

resolution of the conflict include: the rift between the Arab coalition partners and both the PLO and Amman, the deepening reciprocal hatred between Israelis and Palestinians, the increased U.S. aversion to the PLO, and American tensions with Amman. Above all, they include this pinnacle of military dominance of the Middle East that Israel has now attained in the wake of bombing Iraq back to Ottoman times, and the carnage of the Iraqi military without the firing of a single Israeli bullet. If the conduct of Israel at moments of triumph in the past is an indicator, the chances that this Mother of all Moments of Triumph will generate a greater Israeli disposition to noblesse oblige would seem to be slim.

The positive implications of the Gulf War for the resolution of the Palestine Problem and Arab-Israeli conflict include: the removal of the inter-Arab outbidding pressures from Iraq, the rapprochement between Syria and both Egypt and the U.S., the destruction of the Saladin syndrome among the Arab masses, the increased international awareness of the volatility of the Middle East and of the inter-connectedness of its conflicts, the focusing of attention on the need for compliance with UN resolutions, the enhanced awareness of the limits to how *double* double standards continue to be, and the personal commitment of the president of the U.S., in front of the Congress and the whole world, to a just and comprehensive settlement. More problematic, though still potentially positive, are the erosion of Moscow's regional influence and the creation of a precedent for regional cooperation between Moscow and Washington, as well as the invigoration of the UN and the concept of collective action.

The technical implications of the Gulf War that seem to render the "Israeli Security" argument meaningless include: the destruction of all hope of strategic parity between the Arab states and Israel; the failure of Israeli deterrence—the cornerstone of Israeli military strategy—despite the retention of the occupied territories; the vulnerability of Israel to missile attack and worse, again despite the retention of these territories; the dependence of early-warning systems on satellites and AWACS rather than territory; the paramountcy of the mastery of the skies (which Israel enjoys) against ground forces, however vast, on the desert battlefields of the Middle East; and the commitment of the U.S. to the direct military defense of Israel.

VI

Great powers impinge on weaker peoples not only by their action but also by their inaction, by acts of omission no less than by acts of commission. Great powers are almost by definition oblivious to their massive, often traumatic, impact on weaker peoples. By definition also, weaker peoples can only intrude sporadically on the attention span of great powers. Conversely, weaker peoples obsessively focus their total attentive span on the great powers' acts of commission and omission.

It is possible in the circumstances for weaker peoples to be at the receiving end of cumulatively catastrophic policies emanating from the great powers without these powers being even aware of the phenomenon. Thus, the view from the Palestinian footman behind the American Maharajah's elephant is that successive American administrations have been waging a relentless, gratuitous, and undeclared war against the Palestinian people. From this perspective, in short, the U.S. is not only a decisive part of the solution but also of the problem.

The catalogue of imbalances and asymmetries in U.S. policies toward Israel and the Palestinians is truly Himalayan. The running sands of my allotted time preclude its recital.

The only guiding principle in the Middle East and elsewhere worthy of this great republic is contained in a seven-letter word: *Justice*. An ounce of justice is more powerful than megatons of ordnance. There is no absolute justice this side of the grave. But there is Pragmatic Justice. Pragmatic Justice takes cognizance of the genesis and evolution of conflicts, the balance of suffering on both sides in addition to hard contemporary realities. There can be no peace in the Middle East if the Vale of Israel resounds with laughter while the Vale of Palestine is silent and in mourning. There can be no peace on the basis of an aristocracy of pain in the Middle East or elsewhere.

Building is more difficult than destroying. But now that President Bush has shown his furrowed imperial brow, let us catch a glimpse of the kinder, gentler profile. Having slain the dragon, let St. George take to the plough. There is a tree that is waiting to be planted in Jerusalem: the sturdy oak of peace. This is a fitting task for America. It does no violence to the precept in its Declaration of Independence that "people seek historically that separate but equal status among the powers of the earth to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them." It could even atone for the dead of the Gulf War.