

democratic state. I do not oppose the strategy of stages - if your aim is the establishment of a democratic state in Palestine, you have to follow the policy of stages - on the condition that you don't lie to the world, or to the Jewish public in Israel. You should say the truth: that the independent Palestinian state is only the first stage in liberating Palestine, and not as Uri Avneri and the Israeli - Palestinian Peace Council say, that this is the first and last stage. The last stage in establishing a democratic Palestinian state is when the Palestinian Jew and Arab enjoy the same rights under Palestinian law. The different cultures and social backgrounds of Jews and Arabs do not prevent living together in a united Palestine. Yugoslavia is a contemporary example. If we are to use the Arabic terminology: *watan* (homeland) and *quomia* (nationality), there is only one homeland, that is the Palestinian homeland, but there are two nationalities, the Arab and the Jewish Israeli.

How do you define nationality in scientific terms?

The terminology of nationalism is not precise. In short, it is a consensus, but that is difficult to define in a scientific or objective way...In the case of the Israeli Jewish people, an important development can be indicated, adding to that the common Hebrew language and the common land. We can therefore say that through the process of Zionist colonization in Palestine, an Israeli Jewish nation was formed. Of course, this does not mean that it is necessary to have an independent state.

I agree with you regarding the strategic solution, but not that there is an Israeli Jewish nation. It is hard to see that thirty years is enough to create a nation...

We do not differ on this subject, but there are some difficulties from which the Zionist propaganda is benefiting. There are contradictions between the political program of the PLO and the Palestinian National Charter. The Charter states that the Jews who were in Palestine before the Zionist invasion of 1917 to 1948 and their children are the ones considered Palestinian. I think it is very important to correct this part of the Charter, so that when the time of victory comes to the Palestinians, every Israeli Jew who is living in Palestine is considered not as a settler or occupier, but as a citizen who is entitled to equal rights.

If we agree on this subject, then I will not discuss whether there is or is not an Israeli nation. If the Palestinian revolution gives assurances that all Israeli Jews have equal rights in Palestine; if the Palestinian revolution will not ask any Jew in Palestine to return to Europe or the US; if the Palestinian law guarantees equal rights to all, then we will not differ on whether Israeli Jews are a nation or a (religious) sect.

How can we establish this democratic state?

The PLO is the framework with which the resistance movement is affiliated. It is struggling on all necessary levels: diplomatic, political and military. We will build a democratic Palestine by all possible means. The relative importance of these levels varies according to the specific situation. At each stage, you have to emphasize one level. At this stage, I believe the most important is the military. The preferable way to put us on the path to a democratic Palestine is to further the armed struggle in all of Palestine. The peace movement is relatively strong now in Israel because there are Israeli soldiers dying weekly. If the same thing were happening in the West Bank and Tel Aviv, then I am certain that internal changes in Israel would be the same as we now witness vis-a-vis the war in Lebanon.

I think the PLO should at this stage open its membership to the Israeli Jews who are anti-Zionist. If the PLO officially declared that this is possible for anti-Zionist Israeli Jews, who support the political program of the PLO, this would have a huge effect on the Israeli society. However, this should not be an alternative to armed struggle.

What about the role of anti-Zionist, democratic Jews?

The position of the anti-Zionist Jews living in the Israeli society is similar to that of whites, who are opposed to apartheid, living in South Africa where the majority of whites support racist discrimination. Anti-Zionists are a minority. You cannot move to recruit them as if you were working in a (Palestinian refugee) camp. On our part, we have destroyed the Zionist moral: we were raised in a Jewish society; then we raised our voices to the world saying that Zionism is not a solution to anti-Semitism; we are Jews born in a Jewish society, Israeli, but we reject it. In my view, the influence of this moral statement is great.

How do you view the peace movement and other anti-war organizations in 'Israel'?

The emergence of the peace movement and other anti-war organizations has great importance, but I term this a negative importance in the sense that these movements put a limit to the government's freedom to maneuver. It merely wants withdrawal of the Israeli army from Lebanon. The influence of the peace movement is largely due to the heroic struggle of the Palestinian and Lebanese fighters, but the question remains on this level... Half a million Israelis demonstrated against the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, but not even one percent of those who demonstrated is ready to accept, or invite, the survivors of Sabra and Shatila to live with them as neighbors in Tel Aviv.

How do you evaluate the resignation of Begin?

I believe Shafiq al Hout (of the PLO) gave the best commentary - that Begin was the most recent Israeli casualty in Lebanon, but not the last one. In my opinion, it is necessary to see the structural change in the Israeli leadership. Until 1977, all Israeli leaders came from the Zionist Labor Party. In 1977, the Zionist Revisionists came to power. Before 1977, the leadership was from the Haganah; then it passed to the leaders of the Irgun, which was led by Begin; then Shamir inherited the leadership from Begin. Shamir comes from the Stern and LEHI organizations. I see in this continued replacement an expression of the weakness of Israeli political strategy. I believe we will face a dangerous stage in the near future. The Begin, Sharon, Eitan triumvirate wanted to correct the defeat of 1973 with their invasion of Lebanon. It is clear that they have failed. I don't have the least doubt that the Shamir leadership will organize another barbaric attack to correct the 1982 defeat, and again I have no doubt that it will fail. It will be more bloody than Lebanon, but it cannot succeed. I believe it is our responsibility to warn public opinion in Israel and abroad of what could happen, and to prepare ourselves to face this horrifying possibility.

What about the future?

I was born in 1943, and if I live to be seventy, my life span will be longer than that of the Israeli state.