

Reflecting on the Palestinian Israeli aftermorrow

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By **Vincenzo Olita**

Of course, the West as a whole is crossed by dark tremors that invoke, implore and demand Peace in the Middle East. If this were possible, humanity would be spared thousands of conflicts and millions of lives, but this is not the case. In 421 BC, at the time of the inconclusive peace of Nicias between the protagonists of the Peloponnesian War which lasted 27 years, **Aristophanes** wrote a current and instructive comedy. The Gods, annoyed by the prolongation of the conflict, had left Olympus in the hands of Polemo, demon of war, Peace locked in a ravine was freed by the Greek peasants, bringing joy, tranquility and glory as well as the rejection of war. The praise for rural life that accompanies the return of peace, in short, coexists with a sort of utopia, not utopia. Yes, Peace, which has always been a speculation of Man on Man, sees the medieval theology of **Thomas Aquinas**, pervaded by his natural law, identify a natural law in it. Considerations on antiquity useful for framing our path on the conflict which comfort us in thinking beyond any political deference, politically correct information, a priori beliefs producing partisanship and unproductive constructivism.

Dwelling on Gaza and Israel is a media commitment and daily political life, arriving at reasoning of some completeness does not concern either today or tomorrow but the time of the following day, if we want to get closer, to quote Heidegger, to what is useful to think. Ethnic religious conflicts spanned decades and centuries, Thirty Years' War, Huguenot-Catholic – Flemish-Wallon – Civil Wars in Burundi, Myamar, South Sudan, Kurdish-Turkish.

The Palestinian problem is approaching one hundred and fifty years old, dating back to 1881, there were 50,000 Jewish residents in 1900 and 80,000 at the outbreak of the First World War, when Palestine was still a province of the Ottoman Empire (1516 – 1918). Precisely the Ottoman Empire and its expansion in the Balkans and the Middle East offers us a vision of the complexity of the intertwining of territorial conquests and ethnic-religious contrasts. A vision that shows us the different level of opposition and capacity for forgiveness of people in conflicts between combatants and those that also

heavily affect civilians. Exterminations of relatives, extensive involvement of families are not overlooked nor are they forgiven with truces, armistices, and sometimes, not even with peace. Once the Eastern Roman Empire fell and Constantinople was taken, Ottoman expansion began in the Balkans which, for coexistence, after five hundred years and the last conflict between Serbia and Kosovo, still requires international interposition troops today. The Muslim Ottomans could not coexist with the Orthodox Christian world which originated in 1056 with the split from the Catholic Christians who, already in the 9th century with **Saints Cyril** and **Methodius**, had started the Christianisation of the central eastern Balkans.

Conflicts and massacres, we remember that of Otranto in 1480, 813 beheaded, continued until the failure of the 2nd siege of Vienna in 1683, a heavy defeat which stopped the Ottoman push in Europe, weakening it in the Balkans. In fact, the decline of the Ottoman imperialist vision occurred with the birth of the Turkish Republic only in 1923. Here is a historical precedent, naturally with its own specificities and conditions, of a territorial conflict that is intertwined and entangled with religious determinations. Five hundred years for the Balkans, still with its aftermath, one hundred and forty, between turbulences, revolts and wars, for the land of Canaan, we will continue the study not to associate ourselves with one of the sides, nor to insist on rights or wrongs, weak for being relevant for the purpose of a solution and would not be useful to our discussion. External liability?

Certainly yes, identifiable in the etiology of the conflict. 2 November 1917, the English Foreign Minister **Balfour**, on behalf of the Government and His Majesty, sent a Declaration to Lord **Rothschild**, a leading exponent of the Zionist movement, founded in Basel in 1897, which stated: "to see with promote the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...". A completely equivocal statement, a great variety of meanings can be attributed to the expression national hearth. In the Jewish world itself, in fact, the Zionist vision for the birth of a Jewish state in Palestine and a religious conception which found support in the American Council for Judaism for the belief that one can be Jewish by religion and not by nationality were opposed. The rejection of Jewish political nationalism was not followed up, starting from the end of the Great War the exodus to Palestine gradually increased until it reached 650 thousand residents in 1948, 31.4% of the population compared to 1 million 415 thousand Arabs. These were years in which the United Kingdom exercised the Mandate of the League of Nations – from 1920 to May 1948 – the moment in which Ben Gurion founded the State of Israel.

Particularly from the beginning of the last century, and between the two wars, Palestine, territory of the Ottoman Empire until 1918, was crossed by violent armed clashes between the two populations. This was until the proclamation

of the State of Israel when, in the same month, the first war between Arabs and Israelis broke out, followed by another five wars with the current one. At the end of the Second World War, the excellent relationship between Great Britain and the Zionist movement deteriorated until the 1946 attack on the King David Hotel in Jerusalem which caused the death of 91 people, including dozens of British soldiers and officials, and the killing in 1948 of the Swedish count **Folke Bernadotte** who had been appointed mediator in Palestine by the United Nations for a few months. The excellence of the relationship was due, among other things, to the unfortunate choices of the Arab world on the international stage. In fact, in the First World War the Ottoman Empire sided with the Central Powers, in the second the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem **al-Husayni**, having met **Hitler** in Berlin in 1941, started a collaboration with Germany.

Among other things, from 1943 the 13th Waffen SS Division and others operated in the Arab Legion incorporated into the Wehrmacht. The choice of side of the Muslims, naturally, could not fail to favor and strengthen the Jewish position in the Western consensus, consequently worsening the existential conditions of the Palestinians. Compared to the two million residents in Israel, around six million are refugees in various countries, predictably breeding grounds for tomorrow's tough opponents.

It is a political/military illusion to believe that eliminating Hamas terrorists means the end of the terrorist belief and soul. The descendants of today's dead will be tomorrow's opponents. One hundred and forty years of conflict, of life not life, of blood, of vanished hopes, of agreements that were interpreted, quickly with naive optimism, as fundamental and possible bearers of coexistence and peace; to remember them, 1978 Camp David, 1993 Oslo, 2020 Abraham. So, what is there to think at this point? Certainly, as already mentioned, dealing with rights and wrongs and leaning towards someone would be out of time.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that the greatest responsibilities are to be attributed to the winners of the two world wars who, in a mix of bad faith, incompetence and carelessness, for decades believed in an easy and simple grafting of a population into an already populated territory. Today, believing and hoping that the overall situation of the planet, the geopolitical conditions, evanescent leadership with only media consistency, comedians unable to understand the boundary between their own dramas and increasingly dramatic dramas, would mean faithfully following a dangerous continuation of the status quo nunc. It would mean participating in miraculous litanies in which petitions alternate for the non-existent or for visions and rhetoric suited to political correctness. In the first case for a defense system of the European Union, it is known that for a few decades, with every political/military crisis, career pro-Europeans have been affirming the imminent realization of the indispensable

project. In the second to affirm Western unity, closeness to Israel or Ukraine because they are the defense of the West, for Italy some modest supplies of armaments to the second country with the clarification that not an Italian soldier will cross those borders. It is superfluous to go around it, in this time there are no ways out, only dangerous, slippery paths capable only of perpetuating the gray existence of these peoples. Then, if up until the seventies the UN played a role suited to its *raison d'être*, for some time now, with its Agencies, we see the WHO, has privatized its strategies and in all cases does not carry out any role for peaceful coexistence on the planet. So how do we get out of the Platonic Cave? When will the real actors, leaving aside the extras, be able to express leadership capable of using and concretizing words of truth?

The syllogism of this writing leads us to imagine the post-tomorrow, the international community cannot consume its seasons, among the many criticisms, even with a constant, pressing, suffocating thought about the possibility of continental conflicts. If the conflicts that currently exist between the leading or involved countries were to be attenuated, it would be possible to identify paths of intelligent, sensible dialogue. **Saudi Arabia, China, Egypt, Great Britain, Jordan, India, Iran, Israel, the Arab League, Lebanon, Palestine, Qatar, Russia, USA, Chief Rabbinate of Israel, Grand Mufti of Egypt, Scythian Imam**, could give rise to a Forum for the freedom and life of the two peoples. Utopia?

Definitely a step forward from the smallness of so much international politics. In all cases the power of the imagination is preferable, if directed towards understanding historical and contemporary complexities, in all cases free reasoning is still preferable to the uselessness of shouting in these times.

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