

ASPECTS OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

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Wars, as historians of conflicts know, far from being spontaneous phenomena, are rather the climactic phases of violence resulting from conflictual situations. These chronic—albeit dormant—conflicts, while they undoubtedly stem from economic and political tensions, are often affected on a psychological level by collective stereotyped images rooted in the traditions, culture and history of peoples. This is why modern historians, notwithstanding the economic and political factors in Nazi Germany, have also included among the causes for the genocide of the Jews during World War II the influence of a Jewish stereotype in the collective German subconscious.

The relevance of such an analysis is not confined to the societies of Europe. However varied the ethnic or cultural differences which geographical diversity has produced, human behaviour is determined everywhere by the same constants. My reason for citing a familiar instance from recent European history is to illustrate the importance of these pulsations resulting from the collective stereotypes which reside within each and every society, and not only in democracies where freedom of expression allows negative aspects of the collective psyche to come to light. To denounce exclusively the collective psychoses of a single particular milieu—in this case Europe—means not only to limit oneself to a partial interpretation of what is a general phenomenon, but also to patronize one oppressed group at the expense of all other victims of similar social behaviour throughout the world. The only real difference is that in one case such social evils are opposed and condemned, while in the other they are permitted to thrive on connivance or silence. It is with the intention of extending the application of certain theories beyond the limited European context that some of the antiracist arguments of European writers are here examined. The present article thus makes no claim to originality except in so far as it tries to utilize what has already been said or written elsewhere, in order to pinpoint the psychological element in the Arab-Israeli con-

flict. It will touch upon certain general aspects in the range of the emotional, historical, cultural and traditional resonances within the Arab psyche.

Firstly, one could ask whether a Jewish archetype similar to that encountered in other societies exists in the Arab-Islamic consciousness. It can be established, without going into the causes which motivate ethnic or religious archetypes, that in the traditional Arab-Islamic *civitas*, a special legal status separated the infidel from the community of believers. The principle of cultural and religious differentiation should not be condemned outright, since it allows freedom of expression in a plural society. It becomes a manifestation of intolerance only when it is motivated by a desire to diminish politically, economically, socially and spiritually one group in favour of another. Discrimination exists then as *intention* in the mind of the legislator, prior to its implementation through the regulations which will govern the social status of the designated group. It is clearly this discriminatory process which has progressively degraded the *dhimmi*,¹ whose caricature has thereby been indelibly etched into the history and customs of the Arab-Islamic peoples. This dehumanization reveals and motivates the *dhimmi* archetype, an archetype which in the collective mind is itself no more than the reflection of the *dhimmi* condition.

If the archetype of the Jewish *dhimmi* is in fact the principal psychological element in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in particular in the consciousness of the Palestinian Arab, it is essential to define the specific characteristics of the *dhimmi* when they first become discernible under the second caliph, 'Umar (634–644), and especially after the period of the great Arab conquests. What is the strategy reducing an entire nation to a *dhimmi* people? It is the *jihad*, an expansionist holy war aiming at the Islamization of non-Muslim territories, which transforms a conquered people into a *dhimmi* people; while Islam, the force behind *jihad*, spreads Arab values. This is why Islam

and Pan-Arabism are still today inseparably linked in Arab political thinking whereas in non-Arab, Muslim countries, the acceptance of *jihad* will depend on the extent of the Islamization of the State institutions. The example of Iran is noteworthy. While the secular régime of the Shah accepted significant, albeit unofficial, relations with Israel, the religious leadership of the newly-proclaimed Islamic Republic has joined those Arab leaders who have declared a *jihad* against Israel. It is of interest in this context to note Yassir Arafat's message of 11 February 1979 to the Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini, for whom Israel is an offence against Islam:

'... I pray Allah to guide your steps on the road of faith and *jihad* in Iran, which will continue the struggle until we reach the walls of Jerusalem, where we will raise the flags of our revolutions'.²

Bearing in mind that the concept of *jihad* was established in the seventh century and that it aims at the triumph of Islam, the extermination or conversion of pagans and the conversion or humiliation of Jews and Christians, one may question the real meaning of the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) 'secular and democratic state' slogan.

As *jihad*, according to the sacred texts, implements the divine will on earth, it starts an irreversible process of Arabization or Islamization. Consequently, any reversibility of *jihad*—for instance, the recuperation of its national territory by a subject people—amounts to a 'sacrilege'. Allah's will, expressed in divine law ordaining the supremacy of the Arab-Muslim peoples and the humiliation of the *dhimmi*s is thereby flouted. The occupation of their homeland through *jihad* condemns the conquered to live forever as a landless nation. The choice is either to remain in their homeland on sufferance at the mercy of the conqueror, or, threatened by extermination, to flee into exile. The subjected nation, stripped of its political rights and forbidden to carry arms thus becomes powerless; its language, culture and values are replaced by those of the Arab metropolis, thereby modifying both populations and towns. Its national identity is completely extinguished. It is reduced from a nation to

the level of a tolerated religion, by which process confessionalism was developed.

So the *dhimmi* condition may be considered a collective and hereditary one. It characterizes the conquered group as morally inferior, thus reducing it to permanent incapacity. The right to live is granted in exchange for the benefits accruing to the conqueror. This asymmetrical relationship between conqueror and conquered forms the basis of the covenant of tolerance. This paternalism lasts so long as the exploitation of the *dhimmi* is profitable, an aim which requires the *dhimmi* group to remain inferior and unequal. Tolerance is withdrawn if the *dhimmi* rebels or tries to recover his homeland and his independence—or if rejecting the imposed degrading servitude he acquires rights and privileges reserved exclusively for the ruling class. Such 'insolence'—to use the word generally applied to such abuses—substitutes an equal relationship for the asymmetrical one which guaranteed the *dhimmi*'s existence. From then on, his life and property are no longer protected and he can legally be put to death. The covenant can also be broken if the ruler decides unilaterally to withdraw his 'protection'. In either case the sentence hanging eternally over the subjected *dhimmi*s, temporarily suspended by the grant of 'protection', now becomes applicable. They can be dispossessed, massacred or exiled, according to the method chosen by the conqueror.

The *dhimmi* communities are not only marginalized by their inferior status, they also serve as scapegoats. Excluded from a society which only tolerated them the better to exploit and degrade them, they are the victims of every conflict. In times of instability, brute instincts are unleashed, leading to the pillage and the massacre which periodically decimated these defenceless people, whose survival depended on a special conception of good will, inextricably bound up with self-interest. Moreover, uncleanness and impurity is attached to the *dhimmi* condition. This physical repugnance leads to the death penalty for sexual relations between *dhimmi*s and Muslim women. This desire to restrict social contact with a group considered theologically unclean motivates the numerous, meticulous, laws governing the clothes, segregation and travel of *dhimmi*s, as well as the vexing and humili-

ating prescriptions restricting their religious and social activities. The broad outlines of the *dhimmi* archetype are now clear. At the political and collective level, it represents a nation whose land has been Islamized by *jihād*, a process which, theologically, implies the purification of that land from sin. At the meta-physical level, the *dhimmi* represents Evil, the perversity of the infidel who, refusing the superiority of the conqueror's beliefs, prefers his inferior faith. He suffers for his stubbornness either by exile, or if he chooses to remain he purchases back his existence by an imposed condition of humiliation, destitution and servility.

Can it be affirmed today that the *dhimmi* condition remains from an Islamic viewpoint applicable to Jews and Christians in *Dar al-Islam*?³ This question necessitates a distinction between the archetype and the actual juridical status of the *dhimmi*s. While the legal status is based on a complex of laws and customs, the archetype seems at first to be an abstract and fluid purpose. The archetype determines the status which is merely its incarnation in reality. Enriched by popular imagery, nourished on the degradation of the discriminated group, the archetype is petrified over the centuries into a phantasm which justifies and consecrates the condition of the *dhimmi*. Archetype and condition are dialectically linked, the one reinforcing the other. Contingent political circumstances may abolish the *dhimmi* condition by ending the asymmetric relationship, but the archetype will not necessarily be destroyed, since it exists independently of written laws within the collective psyche from whence it inspires the ideology. Deriving from history its obsessive force, it selects from the political currents of the present those elements favouring its realization at a more propitious time. Thus, the archetype conserves and projects the condition into the future, even if it is temporarily suspended or abolished by historical contingencies such as the successful revolt of a *dhimmi* people or its expulsion from *Dar al-Islam*. Thus the archetype, even emptied of its substance, survives in its own ideological structure, whose function is to elaborate and select those factors which will implement it.

To know to what extent the *dhimmi* condition still keeps its validity, one would have to

examine how its ideological structure is formulated in present-day Muslim societies. In this article, only the more obvious manifestations will be mentioned. The *jihād*, for example—which may be considered as the basis of the *dhimmi* condition—has often been proclaimed against the State of Israel. Its strategy as well as its tactics are applied by the PLO and the Arab Rejection Front. The *dhimmi* condition which results automatically from *jihād* (i.e. the Islamization of a land) is implicitly confirmed for the Jews of Israel. Even on the philological level, the claim that the Land of Israel is Arab implies that the Israelis are a landless people condemned to accept Arab suzerainty over its homeland. In the logic of Arab history, 'Arab Palestine' and Jewish *dhimmi* status are synonymous. They are two aspects of the same reality—the conqueror's usurpation and domination, and the exploitation and subjection of the conquered. One can therefore maintain that the whole political and ideological context of the slogan 'Arab Palestine' is influenced by the Jewish archetype—a dispossessed people whose land has been definitively Islamized. The terms 'Arab Palestine' and even 'Palestine'—the latter inherited from Roman imperialism—foreshadow the implementation of the *dhimmi* condition for the Jews, when the propitious hour will come.

Should this condition once again bring about a national dissolution for the Jews in their homeland, they would find themselves obliged, as before in their history, to seek refuge amongst other nations in order to survive. Thus the factors conducive to exile, persecution and degradation would be reunited according to the *dhimmi* archetype, which, from an abstract project—albeit permeating the present ideology—would be fulfilled in reality. One could, therefore, answer the question raised above by unmasking the *dhimmi* archetype behind the frequent calls to *jihād*, in the affirmation that the Land of Israel is Arab, and, more directly and concretely, in the numerous declarations by Muslim political or religious leaders which explicitly or implicitly confirm that the *dhimmi* condition is an obligatory status for Jews within *Dar al-Islam*.

As far as the realization today of the archetype is concerned, or the extent to which Jews have actually been obliged to live as *dhimmi*s,

collective measures taken by Arab leaders against Jews in Arab countries and the specific attitudes of their peoples, show that even until recently Jews were considered as *dhimmi*. Once the process of decolonization was over, the unofficial policy of Arab leaders (with the exception of King Hassan of Morocco and President Bourguiba of Tunisia) was either to expel the Jews or hold them as hostages. Other measures included arbitrary confiscation of property; political, economic and social discrimination including deliberate humiliation; physical maltreatment and imprisonment; and summary executions and expulsions. As a justification for such measures, the political and theological authorities referred to the traditional status of the *dhimmi*. Today—with the exception of Morocco, Tunisia and, more recently, Egypt—the situation of the Jews remaining in Arab countries⁴ perpetuates all the essential characteristics of the *dhimmi* condition: insecurity, marginalization, discrimination and humiliation. The fact that the victims—some young people, but the majority old men and women—are unable to escape to freedom, nor even to imagine its existence, and bow to their fate, does not alter their objective situation. The submission of the serf does not mean that his state of serfdom has ended.

At the collective level, the bloody pogroms suffered by Oriental Jewry illustrate the extent to which it was used as a scapegoat in an Arab world traumatized by colonization and Western penetration. In his study of the Libyan pogroms of 1945, Harvey E. Goldberg⁵ examines the symbolic meaning behind the social pattern of these bloody scapegoat rituals. These outbursts were not confined to Libya but were repeated throughout the Arab world. Moreover, the virulent judaeophobia found in Arab countries is rooted in the traditional demonology of the *dhimmi*, even if some observers, unaware of the various aspects of the *dhimmi* condition, maintain that it stems from Western ideology. Thus, not only pronouncements by political and religious leaders, but modern literature and the collective behaviour of the masses as well, all point to the survival of the *dhimmi* archetype. It took on concrete shape either against Israel, its avatar, or against the still-existing Jewish communities within the Oriental diaspora.

Obviously neither the average Muslim nor

the popular consciousness understand the archetype and the *dhimmi* condition as clear concepts. Carried in the ebb and flow of history from the collective unconscious to a political formulation, they appear at many levels—in proverbs and popular speech, in literature and jurisprudence, in customs, tradition, collective psychosis and political ideology. A critical reflection on the national rights of *dhimmi* peoples would consequently imply not only a complete reversal of contemporary Arab values, but also a reinterpretation of Arab imperialism along universalist lines and not, as heretofore, in terms of an Arab epic. Socio-cultural conditioning and the lack of freedom of speech are only two of the many reasons why such a re-evaluation—which would amount to nothing more than an acknowledgement of the human and political rights of the *other*—has never been undertaken by the Arab intelligentsia. Instead, the latter attempts to update traditional modes of thinking, so as to adapt them to changing historical circumstances. With regard to the submissive and sometimes servile behaviour of *dhimmi* communities—resulting from unconcealed threats, discrimination and insecurity—it stems from their dual rôle as scapegoats and hostages. To this should be added the almost total destruction of their national identity. Today, as in the past, 'tolerance' is granted to the victim only if he accepts his inferior status. Complications arise should he reject this role, refuse to play the game and, breaking the chains of moral alienation, claim emancipation and liberty. In the case of the Jews, the psychosis at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict is precisely the traumatism caused by the desynchronization between the millenary archetype of the Jew and the claims of the Israeli liberating his homeland from Arab-Muslim domination.

Numerous books on the racial persecution of the Jews, the Blacks and the Arabs within Western societies reveal the harmful effects of caricatural archetypes on the collective consciousness. It has been shown that a modification of the relations between oppressors and oppressed—whether through emancipation, assimilation or, as in the case of the colonized Arabs, of national liberation—does not necessarily dispel the demonological archetypes attached to the discriminated groups. On

the contrary, the emancipation of dehumanized collectivities gives rise to new forms of morbid, collective psychoses. In fact, the more the reality is different from the traditional image, the more emphasis will be laid on the stereotype in order to bridge the traumatizing gap between phantasm and reality. Hence, the more the Israeli differs from the archetype of the *dhimmi* Jew, the more hideous becomes his caricature and the more violent and bloody are the oppressor's attempts to adjust reality to the phantasm. Arab societies being no different in this respect to European, Arab attitudes towards their colonized peoples (the *dhimmis*) are hardly different from those of other colonizing powers in analogous situations. The only really different element is that of time. The longer and more reassuring the implantation, the fiercer becomes the hatred against the rebellious victim and conversely the louder are the victim's cries for justice and right.

These general principles appear at two levels in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Firstly, they influence collectively Arab attitudes towards Zionism and towards the remaining Jewish communities in the Arab world. Secondly, and on a far more traumatic level, they explain the relationship of the Palestinian Arabs to Zionism. Whereas in the diaspora the relationship of the Jews to their environment is that of a religious minority, in the Land of Israel it is determined by 4,000 years of history and is, and always will be, that of a people despoiled of its national territory. And this is true whatever the demographic asymmetry, resulting from oppression. The discrimination against Jews was greater in Palestine than anywhere else because of a political dimension—territorial usurpation. The special relationship between Palestine and the Jewish people motivated a persecution which was crueller there than elsewhere. Never was a nation so systematically humiliated and destroyed in its national expression (demography, history, language and culture) than was the Jewish remnant in its own homeland. The conqueror's goal being to impose *his* sovereignty and values eternally over the country, the Land of Israel was thus rendered *judenrein* (the use of this anachronism is justified as the policy preceded the invention of the word).

The reason for such a policy is that the

Arabs had no doubts about their imperialist mission, in which they gloried. The Koran, as they are well aware, makes frequent mention of both the Land of Israel and its people, and Muslim chronicles and other sources have made the Arabs familiar with the history and progress of the conquest. They also know that the only town they founded during 13 centuries in Palestine was Ramla and that the towns, land and cultivated areas which they appropriated belonged to others. They are also aware—from the Koran, Arab legends and the *hadith* (opinions attributed to the Prophet)—that the Jews would one day return to their ancestral homeland. The persecution of the Jews of Palestine helped consolidate foreign penetration, forcing Israel to wander in exile for 13 centuries. In modern times, however, an ever-changing situation worked against the occupant under whose rule the country had become a desert, supporting only 10 per cent of its former population. The weakness of the Turkish government allowed European countries to protect the non-Muslims of the Ottoman empire from the persecutions and massacres that had been their lot as *dhimmis*. Development of the press, as well as modern means of communication and transport, enabled Zionism to emerge into a coherent, world-wide movement of national liberation. Modern technology compensated for numerical inferiority. The times had changed: the small regional waves of returning Jews—previously neutralized by the persecution, expulsion and massacre which awaited survivors reaching Palestine—grew into a movement of mass emigration that was to result finally in the establishment of an independent Jewish state.

This historic context explains the traumatic effect that the progress of Zionism had on the Arab consciousness. On the level of the collective image, the behaviour of European Jews was at variance with the classic archetype of the *dhimmi* (the Oriental Jew or Christian) whose dehumanization confirmed and justified the Muslim community's (*umma*) feeling of superiority and domination. The rise of the *dhimmi* to equality with his oppressor was considered by the latter as a degrading humiliation, reducing him to the level of his former victim whom he had regarded as a social outcast for 12 centuries, to be tolerated only so long as he was useful. Politically, the

rebellion of the *dhimmi* came as a tremendous shock to the Arab political consciousness, throwing into question the legitimacy of Arab sovereignty over territories conquered by *jihād* and threatening to undermine the foundations of Arab nationalism's ideology. For this ideology—in which 'nationalism' has a meaning so ambiguous as to be almost contrary to the European sense of the term—is to create an Arab empire on the model of the Arab-Islamic empire, an empire which was only able to expand by *jihād*, by territorial usurpation outside Arabia and by the political and spiritual oppression of indigenous populations, reduced to the *dhimmi* status.

Consequently contemporary Arab nationalism as the heir to territorial spoils of *jihād* and the guardian of its values has recast the *dhimmi* archetype in modern form. It has answered any expression of non-Arab nationalism by the elimination of the few pockets of resistance which for 13 centuries have withstood one of the longest and most alienating oppressions of history. Oriental Christendom, more directly threatened by the *dhimmi* archetype than Israel, has recently discovered what a Promethean task it is to secularize Arab nationalism. This much is evident from the conflict in the Lebanon. There, it was the PLO which, as the spearhead of Arab nationalism, massacred the Maronites in the name of Arabism. As the PLO considers itself the vanguard of Arabism, it conceives its mission as a struggle against all non-Arab and non-Muslim liberation movements in the Middle East. Christians of Lebanon (ancient Phoenicia) and Jews of Israel, who for centuries had shared the common bond of *dhimmi* existence, thus came to renew their historic ties.

The religious implications of an ideology which retrieves the values of the past are evident: the revolt of the *dhimmi*s contests the divine will expressed in *jihād*-inspired conquests. The result entails metaphysical chaos and the rule of Satan. Israel is an 'inexpiable sin' by its very existence, an apocalyptic sacrilege. The demographic concentration of *dhimmi*s accentuates their demonological characteristics. These project on the *dhimmi* state, as on a gigantic mirror, the horrific features of the *dhimmi* archetype. Israel, the symbol of the *dhimmi* state—half of whose

population is composed of descendants of *dhimmi*s—is the reflection of the *dhimmi* status. Israel is made the scapegoat responsible for every evil which afflicts the Arab world—as well as other regions—and is defamed in international forums. In fact, Israel symbolizes the isolation, the hatred, the contempt which formerly crushed the *dhimmi* communities. Arab ideas about the *dhimmi* and his destiny are found underlying Arab (particularly Palestinian-Arab) writing on Israel, even the most sophisticated.⁶

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that all these various elements are heightened in the consciousness of the Palestinian Arabs, who are directly concerned by the territorial aspect of the conflict. That a land Arabized by *jihād* should have been lost to a *dhimmi* people by the beneficiaries of the *dhimmi* condition during 13 centuries, is considered as a catastrophe of cosmic dimensions. For the Arabs to have to live now under the law of Israel when for 13 centuries the opposite had been the case can only be a sin against Allah. The 'Palestinian Charter' shows a total commitment to the ideology and the conquests of *jihād*: 'Palestine is the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people; it is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland, and the Palestinian people is an integral part of the Arab nation' (article 1). Such a claim necessarily denies the national sovereignty of the Jewish people. Thus '... Claims of historical and religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history and the true conception of what constitutes statehood . . .' (article 20).

The ideas of uncleanness and impurity associated with the *dhimmi* are transposed to the Israelis. The Israeli presence on the esplanade of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem or at the tombs of the Hebrew patriarchs in Hebron offends the Islamic mind; for the Jewish *dhimmi* religion is encroaching on the privileges of the 'superior' Muslim religion. In a UNESCO declaration, the PLO representative, Ibrahim Souss, stated that the Israelis were desecrating the sanctity of the mosques in those places.⁸ Nostalgia for former times when death punished the *dhimmi* entering the precincts of sacred Muslim shrines? The PLO spokesman did not limit himself to this religious observation, but

declared that the Israeli (hence Jewish) presence was defiling the whole of Palestine. The link with tradition and with the archetype is unmistakable: it was this religious idea of impurity that prompted the expulsion of the Jewish and Christian Arab tribes in the seventh century from the pure soil of Arabia. To this day, no church or synagogue is permitted to defile it.

The *Jerusalem Post* carried a report of how a group of Arab villagers in Israel, rejoicing at a wedding celebration, had been heard chanting: 'The Arabs will soon be cutting the throats of the Jews'. The words 'Arabs' and 'Jews'—these simple villagers were ignorant of the niceties of propaganda—express that visceral connection with times past, when the law was Arab and the *dhimmi* was an animal to be stripped and slaughtered. Every available weapon, from burning trees and fields,⁹ from expulsion to massacre, from terrorism to corruption at the UN in order to obtain votes, all these tactics of *jihad* have been and are still used to further its strategy against the rebellious *dhimmi*.

Researchers have demonstrated how the successful liberation of a colonized people may traumatize their colonizers. The impotent rage of the oppressors at the victim's revolt is expressed through hatred, revenge and a desire to exterminate—*i.e.* politicide, in the case of a state. The attainment of equal rights by a dehumanized group *humiliates* the dominant group, which, deprived of its superiority, seeks compensation through bloody phantasms. The mechanism has been closely analysed in the literature dealing with racist phenomena.

Arab leaders officially distinguish between Judaism—the tolerated religion of a *dhimmi* people—and Zionism, the national liberation movement of the same people in rebellion against Arab-Islamic domination on its land. (President Sadat's position has been modified since his visit to Jerusalem on 17 November 1977.) Whereas the Jew is tolerated if he submits to the system, the Zionist deserves death. This theological and political conception justifies PLO-inspired terrorism: Israelis and Zionists are fought by *jihad* in accordance with its sanctions against the enemies of Islam or any subject people in rebellion. This policy is not new. It was applicable whenever possible.

For example, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Ottoman government strove to crush the national revivals of its subject peoples by carrying out wholesale massacres of Christian Greeks, Serbs, Rumanians, Bulgarians, Maronites and Armenians; while on the other hand, it took measures—often inadequate—to protect those same peoples, scattered throughout the empire who were resigned to their traditional status.

This demonstrates that anti-Zionism in the Arab-Islamic geopolitical context is, in many respects, different from European anti-semitism. It also explains the motivation behind the various campaigns launched by some Arab leaders, especially the PLO—and recently by the Ayatollah Khomeini—to win over Jews. Such attitudes, deliberately aimed at isolating and weakening the State of Israel, are nothing but political tactics which the laws of *jihad* allow. Thus, Jews are to be used in fighting against their own national interest. History provides many examples of alienated members of a religious or national group being manipulated by the dominant power. Christian Arab nationalists are themselves a vivid illustration of this phenomenon. If it is true that the destruction of racist myths is a necessary precondition for establishing a better world, by the same token it must follow that the elimination of the *dhimmi* archetype is a precondition for true peace in the Middle East. Such a precondition would imply a recognition of the link, depicted in history and the Koran, between the Hebrew people and the Land of Israel—as well as the right to national sovereignty of the Jewish people in its own land. For the Arabs it would imply an acceptance that the gains of *jihad* are reversible, that the holy war is not a divinely infallible decree, but has a terrestrial dimension common to all imperialistic exploits and that decolonization is a universal process applicable to Arabs also. Pernicious myths which are not denounced will continue to determine the collective behaviour of peoples and consequently the fate of the world, in spite of the seductive ideological dress in which they may masquerade.

Seen in the perspective of history, the destiny of the Jews as *dhimmi*s has specific meaning as a special testimony, since Israel's

struggle is none other than a fight to destroy a *dhimmi* archetype which has bewitched the Arab consciousness with a destructive and nostalgic dream of hegemony, irreconcilable with principles of decolonization or with the rights and liberties of peoples. This context gives the peace initiative of President Sadat, supported by the Egyptian people, a revolutionary significance, in contrast to the reactionary position of the PLO-led Arab Rejection Front. Not only has it thrown off the weight of the past, but it has also created new realities, new trends of thought. It has abolished the asymmetric relationship between a dominant Arab-Muslim people and the Jews, thereby opening the road to a future of peace and mutual esteem between all the peoples of the Middle East. One can only hope that, in spite of considerable obstacles, this courageous policy will triumph over that of the reactionary opposition.

NOTES

1. *Dhimmi* designates 'the people of the Book' (*ahl al-kitab*): Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians, whose lands were Islamized by the conquering Arabs. They were obliged to pay to the Islamic community (*umma*) an annual poll-tax (*jizya*) symbolizing the re-purchase of their lives. The word *dhimma* applied to the relationship or covenant between the dominant Muslim power and the subject peoples.
2. *France Soir*, 13 February 1979.
3. *Dar al-Islam*, 'House of Islam' those regions under Muslim rule.
4. Out of nearly one million Jews who lived in Arab countries in 1948, just over 30,000 remained in 1978: about 20,000 in Morocco, 5,000 in Tunisia and 4,500 in Syria. Two-thirds of these Jewish refugees represent today, with their children, 41 per cent of Israel's Jewish population (*i.e.* about 1,300,000 people).
5. Harvey E. Goldberg, in *Plural Societies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (The Hague, 1975).
6. Y. Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel* (Jerusalem 1971, New York 1972); D. F. Green (ed.), *Arab Theologians on Jews and Israel* (Extracts from the proceedings of the Fourth (1968) Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research), (Editions de l'Avenir; Geneva, 1976) (third ed.); S. Abraham, 'The Jew and the Israeli in Modern Arabic Literature', in the *Jerusalem Quarterly*, No. 2, winter 1977.
7. Y. Harkabi, *Palestinians and Israelis* (Jerusalem, 1974), pp. 51 and 63.
8. *Le Monde*, 2 April 1976.
9. Martin Gilbert, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Its History in Maps* (London, 1974), pp. 20-22. In the year 1936 alone, tens of thousands of trees belonging to Jews were destroyed by Arabs under orders from the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, who collaborated with Hitler during World War II.

collective measures taken by Arab leaders against Jews in Arab countries and the specific attitudes of their peoples, show that even until recently Jews were considered as *dhimmi*. Once the process of decolonization was over, the unofficial policy of Arab leaders (with the exception of King Hassan of Morocco and President Bourguiba of Tunisia) was either to expel the Jews or hold them as hostages. Other measures included arbitrary confiscation of property; political, economic and social discrimination including deliberate humiliation; physical maltreatment and imprisonment; and summary executions and expulsions. As a justification for such measures, the political and theological authorities referred to the traditional status of the *dhimmi*. Today—with the exception of Morocco, Tunisia and, more recently, Egypt—the situation of the Jews remaining in Arab countries⁴ perpetuates all the essential characteristics of the *dhimmi* condition: insecurity, marginalization, discrimination and humiliation. The fact that the victims—some young people, but the majority old men and women—are unable to escape to freedom, nor even to imagine its existence, and bow to their fate, does not alter their objective situation. The submission of the serf does not mean that his state of serfdom has ended.

At the collective level, the bloody pogroms suffered by Oriental Jewry illustrate the extent to which it was used as a scapegoat in an Arab world traumatized by colonization and Western penetration. In his study of the Libyan pogroms of 1945, Harvey E. Goldberg⁵ examines the symbolic meaning behind the social pattern of these bloody scapegoat rituals. These outbursts were not confined to Libya but were repeated throughout the Arab world. Moreover, the virulent judaeophobia found in Arab countries is rooted in the traditional demonology of the *dhimmi*, even if some observers, unaware of the various aspects of the *dhimmi* condition, maintain that it stems from Western ideology. Thus, not only pronouncements by political and religious leaders, but modern literature and the collective behaviour of the masses as well, all point to the survival of the *dhimmi* archetype. It took on concrete shape either against Israel, its avatar, or against the still-existing Jewish communities within the Oriental diaspora.

Obviously neither the average Muslim nor

the popular consciousness understand the archetype and the *dhimmi* condition as clear concepts. Carried in the ebb and flow of history from the collective unconscious to a political formulation, they appear at many levels—in proverbs and popular speech, in literature and jurisprudence, in customs, tradition, collective psychosis and political ideology. A critical reflection on the national rights of *dhimmi* peoples would consequently imply not only a complete reversal of contemporary Arab values, but also a reinterpretation of Arab imperialism along universalist lines and not, as heretofore, in terms of an Arab epic. Socio-cultural conditioning and the lack of freedom of speech are only two of the many reasons why such a re-evaluation—which would amount to nothing more than an acknowledgement of the human and political rights of the *other*—has never been undertaken by the Arab intelligentsia. Instead, the latter attempts to update traditional modes of thinking, so as to adapt them to changing historical circumstances. With regard to the submissive and sometimes servile behaviour of *dhimmi* communities—resulting from unconcealed threats, discrimination and insecurity—it stems from their dual rôle as scapegoats and hostages. To this should be added the almost total destruction of their national identity. Today, as in the past, 'tolerance' is granted to the victim only if he accepts his inferior status. Complications arise should he reject this role, refuse to play the game and, breaking the chains of moral alienation, claim emancipation and liberty. In the case of the Jews, the psychosis at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict is precisely the traumatism caused by the desynchronization between the millenary archetype of the Jew and the claims of the Israeli liberating his homeland from Arab-Muslim domination.

Numerous books on the racial persecution of the Jews, the Blacks and the Arabs within Western societies reveal the harmful effects of caricatural archetypes on the collective consciousness. It has been shown that a modification of the relations between oppressors and oppressed—whether through emancipation, assimilation or, as in the case of the colonized Arabs, of national liberation—does not necessarily dispel the demonological archetypes attached to the discriminated groups. On

rebellion of the *dhimmi* came as a tremendous shock to the Arab political consciousness, throwing into question the legitimacy of Arab sovereignty over territories conquered by *jihād* and threatening to undermine the foundations of Arab nationalism's ideology. For this ideology—in which 'nationalism' has a meaning so ambiguous as to be almost contrary to the European sense of the term—is to create an Arab empire on the model of the Arab-Islamic empire, an empire which was only able to expand by *jihād*, by territorial usurpation outside Arabia and by the political and spiritual oppression of indigenous populations, reduced to the *dhimmi* status.

Consequently contemporary Arab nationalism as the heir to territorial spoils of *jihād* and the guardian of its values has recast the *dhimmi* archetype in modern form. It has answered any expression of non-Arab nationalism by the elimination of the few pockets of resistance which for 13 centuries have withstood one of the longest and most alienating oppressions of history. Oriental Christendom, more directly threatened by the *dhimmi* archetype than Israel, has recently discovered what a Promethean task it is to secularize Arab nationalism. This much is evident from the conflict in the Lebanon. There, it was the PLO which, as the spearhead of Arab nationalism, massacred the Maronites in the name of Arabism. As the PLO considers itself the vanguard of Arabism, it conceives its mission as a struggle against all non-Arab and non-Muslim liberation movements in the Middle East. Christians of Lebanon (ancient Phoenicia) and Jews of Israel, who for centuries had shared the common bond of *dhimmi* existence, thus came to renew their historic ties.

The religious implications of an ideology which retrieves the values of the past are evident: the revolt of the *dhimmi*s contests the divine will expressed in *jihād*-inspired conquests. The result entails metaphysical chaos and the rule of Satan. Israel is an 'inexpiable sin' by its very existence, an apocalyptic sacrilege. The demographic concentration of *dhimmi*s accentuates their demonological characteristics. These project on the *dhimmi* state, as on a gigantic mirror, the horrific features of the *dhimmi* archetype. Israel, the symbol of the *dhimmi* state—half of whose

population is composed of descendants of *dhimmi*s—is the reflection of the *dhimmi* status. Israel is made the scapegoat responsible for every evil which afflicts the Arab world—as well as other regions—and is defamed in international forums. In fact, Israel symbolizes the isolation, the hatred, the contempt which formerly crushed the *dhimmi* communities. Arab ideas about the *dhimmi* and his destiny are found underlying Arab (particularly Palestinian-Arab) writing on Israel, even the most sophisticated.⁶

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that all these various elements are heightened in the consciousness of the Palestinian Arabs, who are directly concerned by the territorial aspect of the conflict. That a land Arabized by *jihād* should have been lost to a *dhimmi* people by the beneficiaries of the *dhimmi* condition during 13 centuries, is considered as a catastrophe of cosmic dimensions. For the Arabs to have to live now under the law of Israel when for 13 centuries the opposite had been the case can only be a sin against Allah. The Palestinian Charter⁷ shows a total commitment to the ideology and the conquests of *jihād*: 'Palestine is the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people; it is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland, and the Palestinian people is an integral part of the Arab nation' (article 1). Such a claim necessarily denies the national sovereignty of the Jewish people. Thus '... Claims of historical and religious ties of Jews with Palestine are incompatible with the facts of history and the true conception of what constitutes statehood . . .' (article 20).

The ideas of uncleanness and impurity associated with the *dhimmi* are transposed to the Israelis. The Israeli presence on the esplanade of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem or at the tombs of the Hebrew patriarchs in Hebron offends the Islamic mind; for the Jewish *dhimmi* religion is encroaching on the privileges of the 'superior' Muslim religion. In a UNESCO declaration, the PLO representative, Ibrahim Souss, stated that the Israelis were desecrating the sanctity of the mosques in those places.⁸ Nostalgia for former times when death punished the *dhimmi* entering the precincts of sacred Muslim shrines? The PLO spokesman did not limit himself to this religious observation, but