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GANDHI AND THE VIOLENCE OF ZIONISM

**(An exchange of letters between Dr. Clovis Maksoud and
Professor V. V. Ramana Murthi)**

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**OF ARAB STATES MISSION
27 SARDAR PATEL ROAD, CHANAKYAPURI, NEW DELHI.**



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ADVANCED STUDY
SIMLA**

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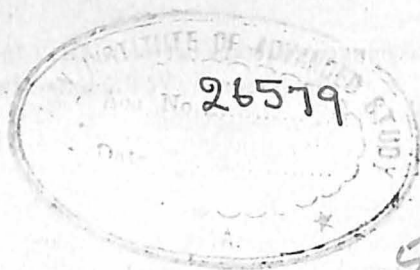
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FOREWORD

“I feel not the wounds you have inflicted upon my body but the wounds you have inflicted upon your soul”, said the mutilated Jamila Bouhraid to her judge while facing trial before the French Colonial Court in Algiers in 1959. This condensation of Gandhism in words and in action by the young Algerian woman bore eloquent evidence of the survival of Gandhi’s impact on the Arab mind. This does not mean that the Arabs have executed all the techniques of non-violence as expounded by Gandhi in waging their struggle for liberation. This is of course understandable in view of the context of the changed circumstances. But the humanism implicit in the concept of non-violence, in the sense that through it one does not only liberate oneself but also one’s adversary, is basic to the Arab attitude towards the racist colonialist pocket violently implanted in their midst.

This was the main thesis put forward by Dr. Clovis Maksoud in a lecture delivered at the Gandhi Peace Foundation on May 11, 1965. The ideas expressed in this lecture initiated an exchange of letters between Professor V. V. Ramana Murthi of the University of Rajasthan, a noted Gandhian, and Dr. Maksoud. Aimed as it was at an impartial ascertainment of the truth, the dialogue proved to be both meaningful and fruitful. We have therefore decided to re-produce the lecture and its off-shoot, the dialogue that followed, hoping that this will further deepen Indian-Arab understanding.

GANDHI AS I UNDERSTOOD HIM

Clovis Maksoud

When I was invited by the Gandhi Peace Foundation to speak on "Gandhi As I Understood Him", I accepted with marked enthusiasm. This was, I said to myself, an opportunity to pay an Arab's tribute to one of the greatest of men. It was also an occasion to re-familiarise myself with Gandhi's ideas, philosophy of life and ethical imperative which bring us to grips with the central themes of our times, so often obscured by the mundane preoccupations of our daily drifting lives.

The responsibility of addressing an audience which comprises a great many persons who worked with him throughout India's struggle for independence weighed heavily on me. I have thought it best to share some reflections and reactions to his approach to problems rather than make a studied, historical assessment of his impact on our generation. In fact, I have the urge in me to deepen my own knowledge of Gandhi through this audience which will be familiar with so many facts unknown to me. It will be a lecture by somebody who knows less to an audience who knows more. And is this not typically Gandhian? That deepening of one's insight can also be achieved through

communion with those whose knowledge is defective or insufficient.

Every great social philosopher who is also a man of action makes two folded contributions to the realm of knowledge and human consciousness. On one level he contributes a method of analysis—a system of enquiry—and on another he makes possible the interaction of his method with the particular time-space context in which he lives. The first can have a validity which is transcendental and the second a validity that is comparatively limited and transient in nature. When people treat the method and the consequences of the interaction of this method in the time space context as inextricable it leads to neurotic dogmatism or to a rejection of what is significant in the social philosophy.

Gandhi's methodology belongs to the realm of ideas; his action results belong to the realm of history. To attribute to Gandhi's action-results, caused by the application of his method to a particular set of circumstances at a certain time, absolute validity, is to frustrate man's search for Gandhi's universal and continuous relevance. This unfortunately has been indulged in by certain Gandhian sectarian interpreters who consider this desirable duality in approach an unforgivable heresy.

The issue here is not so much the impact of Gandhi on his generation and on his time, but the nature of his relevance to subsequent generations. Gandhi's ideas, methods and actions shaped the minds and conditioned the behaviour of the Indian people during the whole phase of their national freedom struggle. This in itself is sufficient to make him one of the most important figures of modern history, but Gandhi's action and leadership were a projection of certain philosophic assumptions that he applied vigorously, fearlessly and consistently.

The translation of his philosophic commitments (ideals) to direct action brought out his methodology which, on the level of essence, constitutes his main original contribution. Like Lenin and Marx, he was convinced of the inter-relationship of theory and practice. Theoretical formulation conceived the ultimate goal to be achieved and helped in determining the phases of struggle through which movements of history have to pass in order to attain their goal.

Practice which was regulated by theoretical schemes was less amenable to dissipation and erosion. Gandhi was different however inasmuch as he emphasized the vital and organic unity of ends and means. The end, in his view, was not only the proclaimed objective but also the manner by which it was achieved. Means were the daily realisation of the end itself. If the vision of the tomorrow does not raise the level of our today then the ethical claim of commitment is unfounded. To perceive the end, in Gandhi's view, was insufficient; the end had to condition our active contemporary involvement. Hence the nature of our behaviour pointed to the moral validity of the end. This Gandhian assumption is valid particularly in the present context.

We are all attuned to different ideologies professing similar, if not identical, ends. If we examine the programs of different parties or governments we find that the objectives they seek are indistinguishable. What then constitutes the lines of demarcation that sifts the right from the wrong, the good from the evil, the authentic from the imposter? In the final analysis, the character or the quality of a society is determined less by the ideals it sets forth for itself than by the nature of the institutions and the means it employs to realise them.

This revolutionary insistence on the equation of ends and at times the subordination of the end to the ethical consistency of the means is a formidable modification—perhaps alteration—*on the politics of change and transformation.*

There has been some discussion on whether Gandhi's methods were evolutionary or revolutionary. There has been a tendency to affirm that advocacy of non-violence meant that his methods were *evolutionary*. On the other hand, whereas Gandhi's method sought to achieve a deep reconstruction of man's sense of values and priorities his methods were *revolutionary*. The first tendency equates revolution with violence and the second mistakes evolution for shallowness. It is necessary, in my view, to define these terms inasmuch as they are inextricably associated with the politics of change and transformation.

Evolution is the natural law that governs the movement of societies. It implies change and progress. Progress in this context means the ever-increasing, ever-growing level of human participation in the benefits that nature and science generate at any given

time and place. The dynamics of production render change in the direction of increased opportunities inevitable.

Hence our assertion that evolution is the natural and inevitable process of history's movement. If this is so, as I submit it is, then revolution is inherent in, and not alien to, evolution.

Revolution is the corrective administered by the process of evolution when it is arrested, resisted or obstructed by the residual aberrations of history and of society. Revolution is the restorative act of evolution's naturalness and the affirmation of its inevitability.

Violence, thus, is incidental and not necessarily embedded. The crux of Gandhi's philosophic attempt was to prove that even incidental or defensive violence delayed rather than expedited the required change. His objection to violence was not only moral but pragmatic. Indian objective realities facilitated the translation of Gandhi's ethical requirements into actual practice. Although non-violence was not always the most potent instrument of struggle, it was, in the Indian context, the surest way to dismantle the imperial order. To Gandhi, however, non-violence was a condition of a struggle. Struggle must mean self-purification as well as the attainment of results. If desirable objectives are to be achieved independently of self-improvement, then the validity of the objectives is questioned. *If violence is utilised to achieve desirable ideals then violence is imparted to the ideal itself. When that is done the ideal would have departed with what is desirable in it.*

The chances of such a non-violent course were not always as bright as Gandhi envisaged they could be. This, however, did not deter Gandhi from rendering non-violence the condition of the national struggle of India but also put the notion of violence intellectually on the defensive. This contribution might not be fully realised inasmuch as people have an instinctive propensity to reject violence. This betrays a lack of understanding of the boldness and risk implied in non-violence. If taken to its logical conclusion it can invite more suffering than the deterrent of equal or superior violence. Yet this bold risk should be undertaken in order to make violence crumble by frustration. In a way, non-violence is not only a method of struggle but also an act of atonement for those who indulge in violence. This indefatigable assertion by Gandhi enriched humanism, no doubt, but it helped

to sustain a large measure of socio-intellectual amorphousness and also softened the thrust of transformative politics.

Non-violence, as applied by Gandhi, animated the Indian nation into a sense of awareness and dignity but also inhibited many sectors of its active elite from undertaking radical questioning of accepted assumptions.

It is felt by many of us that a sceptical attitude towards national ethos is necessary in our societies. This scepticism need not lead to conclusive alienation and can very well mean a more confirmed acceptance. The sceptical juncture triggers the creative faculties of society and galvanizes its purposiveness. Gandhi sought to avoid this sceptical juncture and sought to channel creative potential in basic reform of Hindi culture. His conscientious rejection of untouchability led to a similar shake up that scepticism seeks to realise. Here the social impact of Gandhi's philosophy, in my opinion, is limited to the confines of the historical period when this aspect of his philosophy remained politically viable.

It is not possible here to make a full enquiry into the impact of his methodology on our times. We are almost one generation from the spell of his influence. We understand him from the angle of having shaped the destiny of contemporary India. Applied non-violence and the organic association of ends and means are the most vital and relevant components of his system of thought.

I have endeavoured up till now to give a brief of my understanding of Gandhi's central theme. I did so because this synoptic view is required in order to examine how his principal ideas influenced our reactions to the challenges that face us as an Arab nation.

Let me submit for your consideration one of the major concerns of the Arab people in modern times—namely the challenge of Israel and Zionism to our future. I have chosen deliberately this challenge to see Gandhian principles at work in the Arab context.

It is not for me here to detail the history of the Palestine question. This is outside the purview of this talk. What I want to establish herewith is that the Arab struggle against Zionism is a positive contribution to the fulfilment of Gandhian ideals, methods and objective as mentioned earlier.

Zionism is the philosophy that people who belong to the Jewish faith are a national entity. They are therefore entitled to a state and that that state is Palestine. To begin with, the Zionist movement is predicated on a false assumption—namely that the Jews constitute one national entity. People of Jewish faith belong to several nationalities and are citizens of many nations. Therefore, Zionism undermines the Jews' sense of belonging. It endeavours to dilute their integration as a prelude to breaking them away from their historical and continuous association. In order to achieve its task, Zionism undertakes violence at all levels :

- (1) Violence against the Arabs in forcibly evicting them from their homeland in Palestine.
- (2) Violence against the Jews themselves in attempting to convince them that anti-semitism is inherent in human nature and that there is a permanent polarity between man and the Jew.
- (3) Violence against Judaism by depriving it of the capacity to constitute a dimension of universal culture.
- (4) Violence against humanism by affirming that mankind has done two wrongs to Jews—discriminated against and persecuted them or accepted, accommodated and integrated them.

Zionism equates both 'wrongs'. Persecution which is a wrong that repulses all decent human beings is, to the Zionists, a convenient and a useful wrong. The *wrong* that is absolute and repulsive to the Zionists is mankind's elemental goodness, mankind's instinctive aversion to its aberrations, mankind's healthy inner spiritual integrity, mankind's irreversible commitment to its own unity and oneness. Zionism, in this respect, is on the behavioural and ideological level a most vivid antithesis of all Gandhian assumptions and of Gandhi's conception of man and of society.

I do not claim that we, the Arabs, conform to all the tenets of Gandhi's methods and precepts but in many ways Arab nationalism proximates them and is conditioned by them; Arab nationalism was and remains a liberation movement. Whether its adversaries know it or not its function is not solely to authenticate Arab existence but to humanize its adversary.

Jamila Bouhraid, her body mutilated, facing trial before the French colonial court in Algiers in 1959, told the judge "I fear not the wounds you have inflicted upon my body but the wounds you have inflicted upon your soul".

Arab nationalism has consistently recoiled from notions of racial or theocratic exclusivity. Our nationalism—as in India—was considered an extension of the area of freedom both within our national homeland and inside the homeland of those who deprived us of our freedom. If at certain instances the struggle did not conform to the standards of non-violence, the net result was an enrichment of humanist and egalitarian values and institutions

Gandhi's direct impact on Arab nationalism was his emphasis on the fact that however legitimate national objectives are they should never lose sight of the world context. *To Gandhi, unless India became world conscious the world would not be deeply conscious of India.* This equation, given concrete expression later by Nehru, has exercised a profound formative impact on the evolution of modern Arab nationalism. It is here that the roots of our present policy of non-alignment are to be found.

Non-alignment is, in many ways, the application of Gandhian principles to international relations. It abjures violence to resolve conflicts and disputes; it enables nations who adopt it to exercise through impartial intervention healthy influence, it interposes against antagonistic bifurcation of power; it renders our nations levers for rational and liberalising forces within both blocs; it renders our nations the keepers of world conscience on many issues like disarmament and economic development.

Non-alignment prepares the ground for ultimate unity through co-discovery. In a world where many powers are in an emotionally intransigent posture, non-alignment has insisted on pointing out the threads of unity in mankind's destiny. When nations conceive of themselves as final entities they introduce within their own boundaries the germs of a closed society. The patriotism degenerates into chauvinism and man is dislodged from his centrality. Nationalism, however, is a total ideology and, not as Gandhi conceived, a stage in human development.

Non-alignment has rendered India and the Arab countries able to prevent this collapse of nationalism. Perhaps this partner-

ship in making nationalism a humanist undertaking is the very essence of Indian-Arab friendship.

Violence is the dethronement of reason. So violence is not only the outcome of bloody and injurious encounters. Violence can be clothed with a veneer of grace. In a way, *tolerance* is, in my view, a violent attitude. Tolerance presupposes a superior-inferior relationship and a strong-weak equation. Tolerance is violent because it perpetuates a hurt and sustains an indignity. *Non-violence presumes that tolerance is a graceful and hypocritical version of intolerance.*

Herein lies the association of non-violence with equality. Equality is the essence of and the condition for harmony and mutual acceptance in human relations. We must of course distinguish between mechanical equality and a system of functional equality. The first is neither possible nor desirable. The second is the prerequisite of the good society.

Equality presupposes respect; inequality presupposes tolerance in both its versions. Respect is the emotional texture of equality and only through respect can true love be sustained. If non-violence is, as Gandhi proclaimed it to be, the method of love then equality must be extended to all spheres of human endeavour. It is here that Gandhi's principles and methods cannot be realised in the present context except through socialism.

On this level, Gandhi had no elaborate views but when we admit that violence is exercised through economic exploitation and social disabilities it becomes self-evident that socialism is an extension of non-violence to the realm of an equitable distributive structure of economic wealth and of social welfare and equality. Understanding Gandhi is not an invitation to exalt him but to interpret his contributions to make them relevant to our time.

Equality is dignity. Gandhi fought the national struggle for India's equality in the community of nations. Only then can India preserve and assert its dignity. The logical extension of this struggle was that the dignity of the Indian should be ensured. Socialism and secularism were the actual implementation of non-violence in all its richness and its beauty.

27 December 1965

Dear Dr. Maksoud,

Thank you very much for your recent visit to our University, and especially, for giving me a copy of AL ARAB containing your article on Gandhi. I have read your contribution with keen interest. Your interpretation of Gandhian social dynamics and its historical significance is highly interesting. You also confirm the articulate notion that non-alignment is the inevitable consequence of our non-violence.

I noted your view, with equal pleasure, that non-violence presupposes a certain metaphysic and, thereby, sanctions reason against violence which is unreason. But you touch a controversial ground when you list the non-violent case against the Zionist view. I am afraid the same contention can be advanced by the Zionists, and similar reason in their favour. I recall the famous reply of Martin Buber to Gandhi, and the subsequent discussion between them on the role of the Gandhian technique by the Jews. You will agree that non-violence does not admit of exclusiveness or sectarian rule. I would, as a Gandhian, like to see non-violence becoming a dialogue between the Arabs and the Jews. It is my fervent hope that the Gandhian spirit will vindicate the triumph of reconciliation between them. I seek your forgiveness for expressing this view.

Yours sincerely,

V. V. Ramana Murti

14th February 1966

Dear Professor Murti,

Thank you for your letter of December 27th. I am very sorry for the delay in replying to this but I have been out of Delhi part of the time and in view of the death of the late Prime Minister and the events that followed it was not possible for me to give an adequate answer to your letter.

I am glad that my reflections on Gandhi are approved by you. However, I would like to dilate for a moment on the points you have raised concerning the issue on Zionism.

When you mention that you would like to see "non-violence being a dialogue between the Arabs and the Jews" you unfortunately fall into the intellectual trap that the Zionists and Western propagandists, in particular, have laid.

To begin with, there is no conflict between Arabs and Jews as such. Jews are a religious category, Arabs are a national category. There are Arabs who are Jews. Therefore, to assume a conflict with Jews on the part of the Arabs assumes inevitably that there is a conflict between Arabs and a section of their own population. This is exactly like saying that India should have a "dialogue" with the Muslims. You can suggest a "dialogue" between religions and therefore my submission that the proposition made by you is untenable on Gandhian grounds too.

Our contention is that the conflict is between the Arabs and Zionism and this is essentially a political and ideological conflict caused by the damage the Zionist movement has done to the Arab population of Palestine, to the Jews themselves and Judaism as a religion.

You say in your letter that I shall agree that "non-violence does not admit of exclusiveness or sectarian rule". I agree fully. This is the fundamental cause of our rejection to the sectarian and exclusive rule of Zionism. Zionism is an exclusive ideology that

believes that the Jews are exclusive and hence entitled to a national entity. It is, thus, sectarian in so far as it excludes the Jews from the norms of humanist and universal criterion. If you say, as you do, that non-violence does not "admit exclusiveness" how does non-violence then proceed to make the admitting of exclusiveness impossible. Our contention, and Gandhiji I am sure would have approved, is that struggle against the ideology of exclusiveness and an enclave of religious or exclusive activity is necessary and legitimate.

This is the crux of our struggle against Zionism and Israel. It is a liberation struggle, a continuation of the freedom struggle of the Arab people. Liberation undertaken by the Arabs does not in its realization achieve liberation for the Arabs only but also liberation for those forces caught in the grip of those who deny them freedom. This is how the Arab freedom struggle not only frees us but also helps free those Jews caught in the strait-jacket of the Zionist process of de-humanization.

You say in your letter to me that "the Gandhian spirit will vindicate the triumph of reconciliation". Reconciliation, as I understand it, and I am sure what Gandhiji meant by it, presumes a dispute or a conflict between two legitimately existing entities. This area of conflict is by definition limited and therefore reconciliation is possible and desirable. It is the same as in the case of litigants which presupposes a conflict of interests, yet also the desirability of reconciliation.

Yet the reconciliation is not absolute in its validity in all cases and at all instances. When the situation involves a conflict between a legitimate entity or movement and a transplanted force or a ruthless administration, then confrontation is necessary and desirable. This is the case of Arab confrontation with Zionism, of the nationalist movements' confrontation with apartheid in Rhodesia and South Africa. This is the case of the conflict of the peoples of Angola and Mozambique with Portuguese colonialism and this is the case of the confrontation of the people of Aden and South Arabia with British colonialism.

Reconciliation, as you see, becomes, inimical to the spirit of non-violence and also to the practice of non-violence when it tends to perpetuate injustice, untruth and inequality. Reconciliation,

therefore, cannot be applied to the Arab position on Israel because it means reconciliation with injustice, aggression and untruth. It will mean abandonment of the fundamental rights of the people of Palestine and the consecration of the Zionist violence towards the Arabs of Palestine and also, if I may say so, to the Jews throughout the world.

These observations were prompted by your remarks. I hope they will shed some light on the issues you have raised.

I was very happy indeed to hear from you and to meet you in Jaipur. I am looking forward to your visit to Delhi as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
Clovis Maksoud

21 February 1966

Dear Dr. Maksoud,

Thank you very much for your letter of 14th instant. I greatly appreciate your remarks on a few issues I have dealt with in my letter of 27th Dec. '65.

You contend that there is no "conflict" between Arabs and Jews. In that case, it may remain a "sub-conflict". Both the categories are susceptible to the non-violent solution. When you add that there are, Arabs "who are Jews", you concede the claims of Jews in Palestine. I am, however, concerned with a dialogue between the two. It is not that I am unaware of the differences between the two categories, The need for this is not the least when one is characterized as a political force and the other, as a religious one ("national" and "religious" in your phrasing). You seem to wonder how this is tenable on the Gandhian grounds.

May I invite your attention to the writings of Gandhi on this question? As you know well, Gandhi rejected the exclusive claims of both while sympathising with the victims of injustice across the two groups. Writing in HARIJAN on 26. 11. 1938, Gandhi appealed to the Arabs to choose "the way of non-violence in resisting what they rightly regarded as an "unwarrantable encroachment upon their country". In a similar vein, Gandhi appealed to the Jews in Palestine "to convert the Arab heart." He would not defend the excesses of either. It is on this basis that I, as a Gandhian, will submit to you to consider the relevance of non-violence to this problem.

I am heartened to note that you believe in the possibility of reconciliation as the area of conflict is limited. However, I cannot agree with you when you say that "reconciliation becomes inimical to non-violence." Recent history is replete with many examples where non-violence has brought about lasting reconciliation between conflicting groups and nations. I will not contest the view that

the role of non-violence is not to “perpetuate injustice, untruth and inequality”. Need I reiterate that it is the chosen purpose of the non-violent method to oppose injustice, untruth and inequality with non-violence? I wonder if Gandhian technique cannot be applied by the Arabs to secure their just rights. Let me conclude with this hope.

I remain,
Very sincerely yours,
V. V. Ramana Murti

21st April, 1966

Dear Prof. Murti,

This is in response to your letter of 21st February, 1966.

You state in your letter that my contention that there is no conflict between Arabs and Jews may render it a "sub-conflict" and then you proceed to state that "both categories are susceptible to the non-violent situation". When I stated that there is no conflict between Arabs and Jews I meant it in its full implication which is that there is not even a sub-conflict. There is a full conflict with all its implications between the Arabs and the Zionists and between the Arabs and Israel—a partial fulfilment of the Zionist objective.

This distinction does not seem to impress you as much as I would like it to. Perhaps I did not elucidate on it sufficiently as we consider the distinction elementary. I do not, however, blame you for the confusion because I realize that Zionist propaganda has in many instances succeeded in portraying itself as synonymous to Judaism and inclusive of all the Jews. I realize also that this Zionist thesis has been imperceptibly accepted by many sectors of opinion, particularly in the West. This does not mean that it is valid. It is in fact a deliberate attempt to panic the intellectual world into the acceptance of its jargon.

Judaism, I repeat, is a religion which some people adhere to. Adherents to Judaism are called Jews. Jews are citizens of many and varied countries. As such, they are entitled to all the rights that other religious groups in those countries are entitled to. Being a Jew does not entitle them to special privileges or rights nor should it be a reason to disable one from enjoying equal rights and privileges in any particular society. There are American Jews, British Jews, Indian Jews, French Jews, Russian Jews and Arab Jews. So when I said in my letter that there are Arab Jews how did you get the impression that I "conceded the claims of the Jews in Palestine"?

If your logic was valid, it means that the mere presence of people of Jewish faith in any particular country is sufficient reason for all the Jewish population to lay claim to that country. That I said that there are Arabs who are Jews was to emphasise to you three things :

1. To be an Arab does not exclude the possibility of belonging to any religious faith. In this way, there are Arab Muslims, Arab Jews, Arab Christians and others.
2. By the same token, to be of Jewish faith does not necessarily preclude one from being a national of any country in which one may reside.
3. Hence, the term Arab is a national category whereas the term Jew is a religious category.

Therefore, the question that my stating that there are Arabs who are Jews leads you to believe I concede the claim of all the Jews to Palestine must be considered logically unrelated.

So, a dialogue cannot be suggested between the Arabs and Jews as you stated in your letter. A dialogue can be suggested between Muslim, Jew, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, etc., but you cannot suggest for example a dialogue between the United States and Hinduism or between China and Christianity or between the Soviet Union and Buddhism. By the same token you cannot logically suggest that there should be a dialogue between the Arabs and the Jews. It is inconceivable to suggest that a political entity should have a dialogue with a religious category.

If you seriously suggest this, it means that you do not consider the Arabs a nation or you consider the term Jew to be inclusive of a meaning outside its religious affiliation. It is here exactly where the Zionist thesis seeks to establish itself. It seeks to provide Jews with a political and national orientation extrinsic to their normal sense of belonging and seeks to disprove and ultimately demolish the organic nationhood of the Arabs. If we allow this Zionist thesis to escalate to its logical conclusion, then many painful processes will be set in motion. I would like to mention a few of them.

There would be a process of Zionism polarizing the political loyalty of Jews throughout the world to Israel in as much as Israel in Zionist objectivity and ideology is not only the focus of loyalty but the ultimate locus of residence of all the Jews. You

are, I am sure, well aware that the basic commitment of Zionism and Israel is that of the ultimate "in-gathering of all the Jews". If the Zionist thesis, therefore, is allowed to reach its objective then violence is being done to the Jews in various countries where they have settled as citizens and nationals because Zionism renders their sense of belonging precarious, their conception of Judaism distorted and their presence outside of Israel a cause of unnecessary feeling of guilt. This is the violence that Zionism has done to Jews throughout the world and which I mentioned in my lecture.

This uneasiness and reluctant integration enables irrational forces in various societies to be stimulated into agitation against the Jews in that particular society—hence, anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism does violence not only to its target but also to its practitioners in as much as it saps their humanism, their reason and their decency. In this context, I have often said that Zionism and anti-Semitism feed each other and depend for sustained relevance on each other. We are interested in the defeat of anti-Semitism and Zionism and in preventing the growth of any leverage that seeks to enhance them.

In addition to this, Zionism does actual physical violence to the Arabs of Palestine and potentially to all Arabs. Because Zionism, if successful in attaining its objective of in-gathering the Jews, will lead to the inevitable expansion of Israel and to the total mutilation of Arab character and the disruption of its existence. So when the Arabs state that Israel is not only a product of aggression and violence but is in a state of continuous actual potential aggression we are not, as some would like to give the impression, indulging in unstudied propaganda but are conscious and aware of the content of its ideological ambitions.

Furthermore, Zionism claims that the injustice it has, with the aid of the imperialists, inflicted on the Arabs is less than the injustice inflicted by the Nazis on the Jews. Zionism, therefore, asks the conscience of mankind to give its consent to Israel and to pressurize the Arabs into doing the same.

It is necessary in this respect, to discover the clever—perhaps too clever—Zionist attempt to link the two issues together in a manner that will enable Zionism to exploit ruthlessly the actual Jewish suffering at the hands of genocidal Nazism. This is doing

violence to history and to truth and this is also doing violence to the Arabs on several levels.

It projects the Arabs in a manner that suggests that perhaps they too share in the anti-Semitic persecution against the Jews. This is of course done with subtlety and imperceptibility. The truth of the matter is that there has been no anti-Jewish feeling among the Arabs. They share with the rest of humanity the revulsion against the Nazi crimes and anti-Jewish persecution. This basic Arab humanist position is never allowed to be communicated because it runs counter to the Zionist's reckless exploitation of this issue.

Furthermore, the West, in general, which finds in Israel an escape from the bad conscience of its own discrimination and its own anti-Semitism, is adamant in trying to pressurize the Arabs into accepting Israel and are impatient with the irrefutable Arab case and position. The West is impatient with the Arabs not because the Arabs are excessively insistent but because it fears the reopening of the Palestine question. It fears the ruffling of the stillness of its conscience. In other words, the West wants the Arabs to receive the punishment for the injustice that they have done or enabled to be done against the Jews in Europe.

This Western-Zionist convergence of interests against the Arabs should not deter them from the constant affirmation of their rights in Palestine, of the justice of their case, of the legitimacy of their national objective in Palestine or of their struggle to fulfil this objective. It becomes imperative, you see, that the West and the Zionists should not be allowed to get away with this violent injustice being inflicted on the Arabs. They should not get away with it because it prevents the West from attaining the spiritual reconstruction it requires in order to avoid a repetition of the processes whereby injustices are inflicted upon any community and then finding a solution extrinsic to itself. And when this solution victimizes another people as Zionism does to the Arabs then we allow the floodgates of irrationality and injustice to acquire the aura of historical respectability. This further leads to a position of intellectual hypocrisy where, in the name of practicality and realism, valid ethical and moral positions and claims are vitiated and frustrated. This is violence to truth and Gandhiji, I am sure,

would not have approved of this brutality inflicted upon intellectual honesty.

You must appreciate that violence is not only objectionable when it leads to the wounding of the flesh ; it is far more devastating when it wounds the soul. It is this kind of violence that is more deplorable in the long range as it corrodes creativity, culture and civilization. Violence to the flesh is indeed a cause of great suffering and misery. It dislocates human integration, it shatters mutual confidence, it abjures reason and constitutes the consummation of hate. Violence to the soul—to human dignity—is all what violence to the flesh is. It is, in addition, patient violence. And so if it is not apparently repulsive it is equally sinister. Herein lies the deep root of the concept of violence and it is in this context that the Arab opposition to Zionism and its sponsors must be understood.

When you say that Gandhi “rejected the exclusive claims of both” you are actually equating the “unwarrantable encroachment upon their (Arab) country”, as Gandhi said, and the encroachers, namely, the Jews. This equation leads you undoubtedly to say that “Gandhi would not defend the excesses of either”. Excesses are derivative from the basic fallacy of equating, both the encroached upon and the encroachers. It is an equation between aggressors and the victims of aggression.

Therefore, Gandhi’s appeal to the Jews in Palestine “to convert the Arab heart” (in 1938 when conflict was at its height in Palestine) can be interpreted as an appeal to Jews to reconcile themselves to the preponderant legitimate and historical Arab character in Palestine. In the light of the overall Gandhian approach and philosophy, the term “winning of the heart” could not under any circumstances mean that the Arabs should be persuaded to abdicate their legitimate existence in Palestine. It could have meant that the Jews who had immigrated into Palestine with the protection of the British mandate should behave in a manner acceptable to the Arab population and not as an exclusive or distinct entity which seeks to expand in Palestine and uproot the Arabs.

This interpretation is further validated by a remarkable research article by G. H. Jansen published in the Statesman of 5th April, 1966 where he quotes Gandhi commenting in November, 1938 on the situation in Palestine :

"My sympathy is all with the Jews". (Referring to their persecution in Germany) but sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs...If the Jews have no home but Palestine will they relish the idea of being forced to leave the other parts of the world in which they are settled? Or do they want a double home where they can remain at will? The Palestine of the biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their national home it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun... Nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds".

I recommend this article to you for further evidence of Gandhi's essential position on Zionism and India's support to the Arabs after independence springs from these basic ethical considerations. I hope the remarks made in this letter will be satisfactory to you and to the many Gandhians in India with whom I have the most intimate association. To appreciate our position, it must be understood that the so-called Arab "sensitivity" on this issue, as it is described in many sectors of the world press, emanates from a profound rejection of violence to our territory in Palestine, to our people in Palestine and to the Arab spirit that Palestine symbolizes.

Yours sincerely,
Clovis Maksoud

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