

The lunatic defence

From



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Washington

I HAVE a new friend. He lives right now in New York, but he's Israeli through and through. In fact, he's one of Israel's best-known and most gifted novelists. He wrote *The Road to Ein Harod*, which is the reason we met—a novel about a right-wing take-over in Israel resulting in a "crazy" situation in which not only are Palestinians hunted down but so are "leftist" Israelis like Amos Kenan.

"A leftist in Israel," Amos writes, "is neither communist nor Marxist, it's somebody who thinks Israel should make peace with the Palestinians."

"You become an extreme leftist," my new friend adds, "only when you believe that Israel should negotiate with the PLO."

Amos is among Israel's confused and bewildered "extreme leftists". You find them in strange places scattered throughout the society. Many are of Amos's generation, late 50's and 60's; and in some cases, like Amos's, fought with the Israeli right-wing in their youth. Sadly they are all divided into a variety of fractured groups and organisations that hardly are able to keep up with each other's activities.

But what brings these "leftists" together is a different kind of Zionism, a variant that few but themselves know very much about, a Zionism that really isn't Zionism anymore, not in the

sense the word has come to be widely understood anyway. When Amos got a table full of his friends together for me a month or so ago in Tel Aviv they all kept insisting that their real identification was not as Jews, and not as Zionists, but as Israelis, something new under the

sun. And in some cases, important cases like Amos, these Israelis are eager to form alliances with Palestinians as they in many ways talk a language strangely reminiscent of the old secular state formula.

All this is simply by way of a short introduction to Amos

Kenan and Israelis like him. In a few weeks a lengthy interview with Amos will be appearing here so he can talk about these difficult but extremely important concepts and distinctions himself.

For now, something else is on my mind—the May 20 massacre that has unleashed the second phase of the Intifada.

Since it happened this tragic event has been on Amos's mind. He had something on his chest that he wanted, needed, to say about all this.

Now back home, in Israel, Amos Kenan is a rather well-known writer. His column appears weekly in Israel's largest-circulation newspaper, *Yediot Aharonot*. His articles appear prominently in Israeli magazines. And his latest novel, *The Road to Ein Harod*, was made into a movie.

But here in America the rules of the road are different, especially when what you want to say doesn't conform to the general norms of debate.

So last week Amos wrote what he had to say and quickly tried *The Nation* magazine, then *The New York Times*. No go, no takers. Then, pressured by time, he had it faxed to over 25 smaller American newspapers. No go, no bites, nobody interested. Maybe nobody understood.

Judge for yourself. Here's what Amos wrote but didn't succeed in getting published anywhere in the great US of A.

They say he is just a lunatic

By Amos Kenan

THE 21-year-old youth from Rishon Lezion who shot and killed seven Palestinian labourers is considered and declared by Prime Minister Shamir and Foreign Minister Arens as a lunatic, a psychotic, or at least a single phenomenon not related to Israeli officialdom.

Also, these two Israeli leaders expressed the hope that "the world" is intelligent enough not to blame the Jewish state for the act of a single exception. A hope which is, of course, very much hopeless at this point.

This dreadful massacre of course is not the official, only the officious policy of the Jewish state of Israel, highly praised by Israeli political and spiritual leaders.

Not long ago, Rabbi Moshe Levinger was condemned and imprisoned (for a few months) for killing an innocent Palestinian merchant in Hebron. He went to prison accompanied by a giant procession of the once very prestigious religious youth movement, "Bnai Akiva".

Rabbis and Knesset members published messages encouraging him. Rabbi Mordechai Zvi Neria, the 77-year-old venerated spiritual leader of Bnai Akiva, wrote, just a few weeks ago now: "It is not a time to think now: it is time to shoot." He was obeyed, almost immediately.

Israeli President Chaim Herzog has used generously his power of amnesty to liberate all the members of the so-called "Jewish underground" who killed and/or maimed some Palestinian leaders of the occupied West Bank.

Tell me whom you praise, I'll tell you what you are. Tell me what sort of killer you set free, I'll tell you what your moral code is, what sort of regime you represent, what sort of killing you prefer.

The core of the issue is, of course, not the obvious official attitude but the hidden moral basis of it.

Morality is part of the basis of ideology. Ideologies, since Moses and Jesus and unlike vegetal growth, grow downwards, not up.

When ideologically your neighbour is not your equal, you don't have of course, to kill him. But if and when so doing, you don't kill your equal.

That's all, and the whole, difference.

Israel does not accept the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians, as equal, entitled to equal human rights.

Human rights include the right of self-determination.

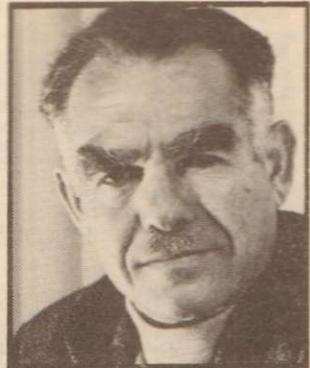
And it is this right, primarily, which is insistently denied by Israel when it refers to Palestinians.

This is the Israeli Primordial Crime.

The Rishon Lezion massacre—what in ironical and allegoric name for the first Jewish settlement in Palestine, mid-19th century at the beginning of modern Zionism, and which when translated into English means "the first of zion."



Chaim Herzog



Shamir