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# WORLDVIEW

## EXCURSUS 2

### Mark A. Bruzonsky on THE PARIS DECLARATION

On July 2, 1982, during the height of Israel's massive and relentless bombing of Beirut, three of the world's most respected Jewish statesmen—Nahum Goldmann, Pierre Mendès-France, and Philip Klutznick—issued a plea for Palestinian independence, mutual recognition of Israeli and Palestinian nationalisms, and negotiations between Israel and the PLO. On July 3, Yasir Arafat sent a thoughtful response from his bunker in West Beirut. For two days the exchange dominated the front page of France's leading newspaper, *Le Monde*. The plea and the response from the chairman of the PLO helped set the stage for direct PLO-American Jewish and PLO-Israeli contact. Though largely unreported in the press, there have been exploratory meetings between top officials of the American Jewish Congress and the Zionist Organization of America and very high-ranking PLO personalities. In March, a delegation of Israelis sponsored by the newly created International Center for Peace in the Middle East attended a dinner in Hungary with the PLO's number-two man, Abu Syad. The most significant contact took place last January, when Arafat, accompanied by senior PLO figures, openly received an Israeli reserve general, the former director of Israel's Finance Ministry, and the publisher of one of Israel's leading weekly magazines.

Two of the July signatories, Nahum Goldmann and Pierre Mendès-France, have since passed away, and their plea, eventually known as the Paris Declaration, has become their final appeal to the Jewish people. Goldmann was of the company of Herzl, Weizmann, and Ben-Gurion—a towering figure of modern Zionist history and one who had major influence on Jewish life. It was he who, in order that expression be given to both the unity and diversity of Jewish life, inspired and was a co-founder of the World Jewish Congress. Mendès-France, French patriot and statesman of international stature, combined Jewish values with a socialist outlook; and to his last days he anguished over the predicament of the Jewish people. Philip Klutznick, the third signatory, was secretary of commerce during the Carter administration. A former president of both B'nai B'rith International and the World Jewish Congress, he was co-founder, with Dr. Goldmann, of the Presidents' Conference of Major American Jewish Organizations.

In retrospect, the Goldmann-Mendès-France-Klutznick statement seems to have brought into public view the widening fissure between important segments of diaspora Jewry and the State of Israel over the "Palestinian problem." Not until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon had three major Diaspora personalities come together with a statement so critical of the Israeli Government, so publicly in favor of Palestinian independence and of negotiations between Israel and the PLO. Why the change?

Simply put, the "Jewish problem" has not been solved by Zionism. In some ways it has only been exacerbated. After some three-and-a-half decades of independent existence in the historic homeland of the Jewish people, Jews remain fearful, uncertain, and insecure. Furthermore, there is an uneasy feeling that Israel's current military strength does not in itself guarantee the viability and longevity of Jewish independence in the Middle East; and Israel's attempts to command the political loyalty of the Jewish diaspora have caused a rebirth of the debate over the meaning and legitimacy of Jewish life in the Diaspora.

Today, an old and rejected form of Zionism has revived

and taken firm hold of political power in Israel. It is the Zionism of Begin and Sharon. It is certainly not the Zionism of Goldmann, Mendès-France, Klutznick, or large numbers of Israelis and Jews throughout the world. Israel's greatest prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, at the time of his death proclaimed that for a true peace with the Arabs he would be prepared to withdraw from the occupied territories. On the occasion of Menachem Begin's first visit to the United States in 1948, leading American Jews—including Hannah Arendt and Albert Einstein—wrote to the *New York Times* to warn against Begin's group, "among the most disturbing political phenomena of our time." Begin's group, they maintained, bears "the unmistakable stamp of a Fascist party for whom terrorism (against Jews, Arabs, and British alike) and misrepresentation are means, and a 'Leader State' is the goal."

Israel's current political leaders have distorted the national movement for which Jews have struggled for so long; they have discredited the very concept of Zionism; they have dangerously isolated Israel and squandered Israel's moral claims; they have, finally, begun to unravel the ideological and social compact that bound the Diaspora and Israel without either dominating the other. They assert openly and contrive privately to control the public utterances of Jews in the Diaspora. And, demagogically, they insist that fealty to Israeli policies is the primary test of contemporary Jewish authenticity. They have taken Israel and Zionism down a path of militarism and political fanaticism, transforming the Zionist tradition of broad humanism into a narrow, nationalistic xenophobia, reminiscent of the European ghetto.

Israel must return to its original vision, to become a light unto nations and a source of spiritual pride to Jews all around the world. That was the central message that brought Na-

hum Goldmann, Pierre Mendès-France, and Philip Klutznick together last July in Paris. Yet this vision cannot be fully realized unless and until the Palestinian people are treated with the same measure of justice and compassion we Jews demanded for ourselves just a short time ago.

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#### THE PARIS DECLARATION

Peace need not be made between friends, but between enemies who have struggled and suffered. Our sense of Jewish history and the moral imperatives of this moment require us to insist that the time is urgent for mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinian people. There must be a stop to the sterile debate, whereby the Arab world challenges the existence of Israel and Jews challenge the political legitimacy of the Palestinian fight for independence.

The real issue is not whether the Palestinians are entitled to their rights, but how to bring this about while ensuring Israel's security and regional stability. Ambiguous concepts such as "autonomy" are no longer sufficient, for they too often are used to confuse rather than to clarify. Needed now is the determination to reach a political accommodation between Israel and Palestinian nationalisms.

The war in Lebanon must stop. Israel must lift its siege of Beirut in order to facilitate negotiations with the PLO, leading to a political settlement. Mutual recognition must be vigorously pursued. And there should be negotiations with the aim of achieving co-existence between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples based on self-determination.

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