

Interview with Dr Kurt Waldheim of Austria

Political solution impossible without Palestine state

From



Mark A. Bruzonsky

Washington

'Intifada is largely a peaceful demonstration against the occupation of those territories by the Israeli forces and I think it gives ample proof of the fact that the whole question cannot be resolved through force but must be resolved through peaceful means.'

I WOULD really like to talk very candidly, very openly.

The last two years there has been the Palestinian Intifada. Has this changed or affected your views about the Arab-Israeli problem? I mean how has the Intifada impacted on you sitting here as the President of Austria?

• The Mid-east problem is one of the most serious, most urgent, most explosive in world affairs. And it is urgent to resume the negotiating process. The Intifada is largely a peaceful demonstration against the occupation of those territories by the Israeli forces and I think it gives ample proof of the fact that the whole question cannot be resolved through force but must be resolved through peaceful means. I therefore support the suggestions made by different quarters that (it is important) to start a negotiating process again through an international peace conference on the Mid-east. I think this is necessary. Negotiations are stuck since quite a time, and I think this is dangerous.

UN resolutions and even keep the Chairman of the PLO from addressing the UN in New York?

So what do you Europeans think can be done about a terribly explosive situation that could even result in a major war when the one power in the world that could do something about this continues to act, day in and day out, as if its opinion can defy everybody else's?

• Well, I have noticed a certain evolution in American attitudes regarding the Mid-east problem. The fact alone that they are ready to talk to the Palestinians is in my opinion a step in the right direction.

Regret

I do regret that not more has come out of this effort because the talks in Tunis haven't produced...they are stuck. But we have to continue these efforts. What is the alternative to negotiations? There would be again a military confrontation, and that has to be avoided by all means, that can't solve the problem. Therefore we have to continue the efforts in the direction of negotiations.

■ But you Europeans could do more. You could not only speak up more diplomatically, you could take certain economic steps to put more pressure on to make real negotiations more likely.

• Look, in my opinion the Europeans are doing nothing...The whole matter is left, more or less, to the Americans. And they of course handle everything in close contact with the Israelis. So here I hold for the Europeans, they could and should do more in this regard. They are historically in a good position to do that. I therefore feel that a more intense role by

resolved military. The parties concerned, not only Arafat, more and more realise that a negotiated settlement is necessary. And I think Arafat has decided to follow that course with his repeated efforts to begin negotiations.

Of course here the help of not only the Big Powers but other forces are necessary. If parties try to settle problems very often they cannot do it alone. They need other parties to help them. I don't think that Big Powers alone can do it. I don't think that the Americans alone can do it. It needs a joint effort, not only by the parties directly concerned, but by other governments including the Europeans. And now with these new developments in Moscow and Eastern Europe I could well imagine that there is now a better chance to involve the other superpower in these efforts. So why not try again?

■ Before talking more about trying again let me go back to Arafat. Was there ever a time that you considered him a terrorist?

• When I started to know him — I had my first meeting soon after I had taken over as Secretary-General, I think it was 1972 — he reassured me repeatedly that he wants a peaceful settlement. I also indicated to him that it would be important to recognise, or to accept, the existence of the State of Israel, to accept resolution 242 which in my opinion is still a good basis for a settlement.

And he told me that he would be ready to do so, but that he needs also an assurance from the other side. He explained that it couldn't be a one-sided decision by the Palestinians. He said that this is the only card that I have...

• Well, we discussed it and that is my recollection that he mentioned that of course I do understand the necessity of such a move but why should it be done unilaterally without knowing what the other side will do, why should I play the only card I have now — that's how he expressed himself — without knowing that this will lead to a

solution.

I explained to him that it is very important to make clear that the statements which were made by some Palestinian leaders that he does not share these remarks — for instance that they would push the Israelis into the sea. And he said that the resolutions of the PLO do not ask for the destruction of Israel...

Do you see any political solution without a Palestinian State? Is it realistic to be talking about any kind of solution without a Palestinian State?

No, this is certainly the key question, the main issue...



■ But I think what happened last year did at least as much harm to the image of the UN. The image of the host country telling the entire world that the General Assembly could not listen to the leader of the Palestinians. What would you have done? Would you have done something different if you were still Secretary-General? How can the UN accept such treatment from the host country?

• It was in my opinion a mistake, because under the headquarters agreement everybody has the right to come to the UN and since the PLO was recognised and is recognised by the UN it would only have been logical to permit Arafat to come. He was there before...

■ But let me ask you very bluntly, you're one of the senior statesmen in the world, very few people have your experience, especially on UN matters. When the host country continues to act as it does, threatening to withdraw its financial contributions, threatening other UN agencies, threatening the General Assembly, refusing visas... I mean, haven't we reached a time in history when maybe we should honestly start discussing that maybe New York is not the place for the UN?

• Well, of course I regret any decision which hampers the normal functioning of the UN, but I do feel that New York is an important place for the UN. It is an international centre, the UN gets more attention through the fact that it is headquartered in New York. So, despite those inconveniences which I deeply regret I still feel that it would have been only logical, and in line with the Headquarters Agreement, to permit Arafat to come.

What difference does it make

First the long discussion in the media whether he should come or should not come, etc. Then the decision by the US not to permit him to come the New York so there was a decision by the General Assembly to switch that session to Geneva...

■ But there is a difference. The difference is that it looks as if the US is demeaning the UN, the whole authority of the UN...

• Let's be frank, it's all connected with the special relationship between the US and Israel. We have to see the facts! There is this special relationship...

■ Yes, but we can't allow that to destroy international institutions!

• I regret the fact that in this case the Headquarters Agreement was not implemented and that therefore the Assembly had to make the decision to hold that special session in Geneva. I don't understand the reason, because it was more expensive to transfer everything in Geneva and Arafat could speak before the same Assembly in Geneva as well as New York. I really didn't understand the whole thing. Perhaps only for psychological reasons...

■ Perhaps the Americans continue to think that only their vote alone is the most crucial vote on certain issues. And that's a very dangerous position for all of us to be in.

• Well, it is a big power, it is the host country of the UN, and therefore it is regretted that this decision was made, but I think the General Assembly...

■ What if they do it again?

• Well I can't speak for the government of the US. It's a hypothetical question and it will be up to the General Assembly.

■ Let's go back and talk about

themselves committing war crimes against the Palestinians. Now since Israelis themselves are raising these issues — its in their papers, its in their poetry, its in their literature — why is it that here in Europe where the whole issue of war crimes and how to treat civilian populations began, how come there are no voices speaking up here? I'm surprised as I visit this part of the world that people know what's going on but they don't really want to speak about it...

• You see...one of the reasons is that there is still embarrassment about what happened during the Nazi era, the treatment of the Jews by the Nazis. All this has left a deep impact on the Europeans and one tries, this is my interpretation but I think I'm right, one tries to avoid giving the impression that there is any sort of anti-Israeli feeling or anti-Jewish feeling.

And it is because of this psychological aspect, because of the tremendous suffering of the Jewish people during Nazi era, that the European countries try to understand the feelings of the Jewish people and also the wish of the Israelis to avoid any development which could again threaten their state. And since

'We have recognised the Palestinian declaration of Statehood, but not the State because the State does not exist...yet'

the European want to avoid to create such an impression, they want to show their understand-

■ What you've just said, of course, is supported by many countries, but its the exact opposite of the policies of both the US and the Israelis who insist that they will not go to an international conference.

● But that is no reason why I do not support it. I think that there is now, since quite a time already, certain openings in regard to talks with the Palestinians, and the PLO, as we can see in Tunis when some time ago the Americans began discussing the issues with the Palestinians. So I think there is a certain opening, and I think it should be used for starting the negotiating process.

Such a conference should serve as an umbrella for more detailed and concrete negotiations in regard to the different issues we are facing in the Mid-east—like the question of the Golan Heights; and of course the Palestinian issue.

ME question

In other words the Mid-east question is just not one question but it comprises a number of aspects and they should be dealt with under the umbrella of an international conference.

But the main problem seems to be the composition of the Palestinian delegation, the refusal of the Israelis to negotiate with the Palestinians and things like that...

■ Well, let's try to be as candid as we can within the boundaries of diplomacy. Isn't the main problem that the Israelis are not interested in a settlement with those people who insist on a Palestinian State, that they are not prepared to talk with Palestinian nationalists, they prefer to discuss, in fact they insist on this, only with Palestinians they approve and then to discuss only their own agenda. Isn't this why there isn't going to be an international conference?

But let me try to take this one step further. Most of the people in the Mid-east do think there should be an international conference, that this is what is required. But how do we make that happen when the US, continues to refuse and continues to veto



Arafat

the Europeans should be kept in mind. They can and should play a greater role.

■ Last year Arafat was in Geneva and made the statements which the Americans then said that finally he had recognised Israel. You've received Arafat since then, I believe, here in Austria...

● Oh yes...

■ And has your government recognised their declaration of Statehood?

● We have recognised the declaration, but not the State because the State doesn't exist...yet. Therefore, we did recognise, like a number of other Western countries, the declaration and of course we are in contact with the PLO for many years now like when I was in the UN. I have received Arafat here, so did our Chancellor, when he came for a visit last year in Vienna. Of course I had met him before at the UN and also on a number of occasions in the Mid-east.

■ What are your impressions of him as the leader of the Palestinians, as a diplomat?

● I think he really wants a negotiated settlement. Therefore his declaration concerning resolution 242 and his clarification about the existence of the State of Israel. I think there really is now a new basis—and one should not neglect, really neglect, this new basis, one should do something with it.

To go on with the same old policy of ignoring the Palestinians and ignoring the PLO doesn't really solve the problem and doesn't make sense. For the PLO has been declared as the sole representative of the Palestinian people by the Rabat declaration many years ago, and it hasn't been changed. Therefore, if we want to make progress, one has to negotiate with the Palestinians represented by the PLO as the Rabat decision decided.

■ You remember Rabat, and I remember Rabat because I've read about it. And we're really talking about the Egyptians and Ismail Fahmy who promoted that declaration. But I wanted to get some sense of Yasser Arafat the person as you are one of the few people in the West who has known him over a long period of time and so you've seen his evolution, you've met with him quite a few times, you've travelled to the region, and God knows you were involved at the UN in trying to solve this problem. Can't you just give me some insights how you see him?

● I think Arafat recognised the fact that the problem cannot be

■ You are saying that he was ready for mutual recognition back in 1972?

Problems created by colonial rulers

Conflict in the sub-continent

AFTER the end of World War Two, conflict among many new states arose from a variety of causes, particularly the continuing ethnic, religious, and linguistic divisions among the highly nationalistic developing countries. The basic problem, inherited from the colonial rulers who drew the frontiers of these "nations", is that many ethnic groups were at that time divided between two or more colonies and at the same time other ethnic groups suddenly found themselves lumped together in the new colonial country.

The new states created by the colonial powers may have become "national" in the sense that the people living in them have rid themselves of foreign rules. But their common resentment and aspiration to be free has not developed into shared allegiance to nations with artificial frontiers previously drawn by their colonisers.

Integrating diverse masses into new nations, forming national consensus, is therefore crucial. Race is one element impeding this "integrative revolution" as is the case in many countries in the world and mainly in East and South-east Asia.

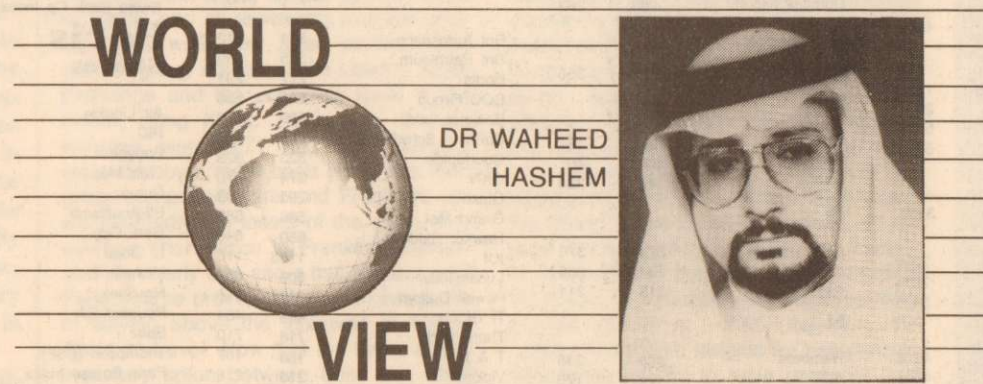
There are also religious animosities. When these spark religious wars and lead to massive dislocation of millions and slaughter of hundreds of thousands, they seem incomprehensible. When India gained its independence, it was partitioned into Hindu secular India and Muslim Pakistan because the Muslim minority wanted its own nation. Such a division was accompanied by a great bloodbath that

nantly populated with Muslims, yet were placed under the control of India. The second war of 1965 was also fought over the disputed area of Kashmir, yet Pakistan was unable to get them as a result of the imbalance of military might between the two countries.

An attempt to secede may lead to civil war as the government resists. It can even lead to international war if another state becomes involved. This is the case of the third Indo-Pak war when East Pakistani sought to secede from Pakistan, the Pakistani government objected, and when East Pakistan neglected such objection and went ahead with independence, the Pakistani army interfered to prevent it. This move stimulated India to interfere too on the East Pakistan side, fought with Pakistan and helped establish the state of Bangladesh. This move has also weakened Pakistan so that it could no longer seriously rival India on the sub-continent.

As a result of religious animosities, racial hatred, increasing social and political problems of inequalities, and the rise of Islamic sentiments among the Kashmiri people, India had and still have to face an increasing bloody insurgency that calls for secession from India. This insurgent movement has become a wide popular movement and is gaining internal as well as external support for their cause. However, in the last couple of month, the Kashmiri national uprising was mounting and has become increasingly difficult to control by local security forces.

This critical situation has forced India to send paramilitary forces



washed the lives of over half a million people.

The post-colonial states in general, and India-Pakistan in particular, have inherited these problems as well as the boundary problems. The natural results have been, on the one hand, irredentism and, on the other, separatism. Irredentism is the movement by one state to incorporate within its boundaries the portion of its predominant ethnic group that has been separated and also the territory on which that portion lives. Political borders, it is claimed, should coincide with ethnic and regional boundaries. In the drive to reunite divided "peoples" frontiers thus become objects of conflict among the developing countries.

Separatism is a movement for self-determination. The new developing countries have invoked this principle to legitimate their claims to independence from colonial rulers. But now it is being invoked against them by ethnic groups in their own populations, which could lead to national disintegration.

In the last four decades, because of the mangling of these internal factors with the external factor, which is the superpowers' continuous infringe upon the two countries as a result of the two countries' strategic geo-political location, India and Pakistan have gone to war three times and might go to war any time today or in the future.

The first war was in 1949, two years right after the independence of India and its division into two countries, fought harshly over the fate of Jammu and Kashmir. The two states were and still are predomi-

to quell the Kashmiri uprising by force and to prevent any possible interference of assistance from outside. However, the Indian forces have dealt with the situation brutally, and ruthlessly repressed the popular uprising of the Kashmiri people to self-determination. Moreover, the Indian government has refused to negotiate with Kashmiris and even refused to solve the crisis according to the UN 1948 resolutions calling for a plebiscite in the state to determine its political future.

Furthermore, the crisis was escalated to the brink of a fourth Indo-Pak war when the Indian government accused the Pakistani government of covertly assisting and arming the Kashmiri insurgents. At this point in time, most political analysts have no doubt that a fourth Indo-Pak war is unlikely, not only because the two countries have learned from their previous mistakes, and not only because the two superpowers have strongly advised the two countries not to go to war, but because a fourth war is increasingly devastating for both countries militarily, politically, and economically.

In any event, the problem is there to stay—may be for ever—as long as the internal cause, that we have already mentioned above that trigger it from time to time, exist in the minds and hearts of the people. These internal causes are seemingly reflected on the reality of a 140-km piece of land that is called the Kashmir valley. The valley that might in the future tragedy provoke a fourth bloody war that could lead to the first use of nuclear weapons since the end of World War Two.

What difference does it make if he speaks in New York or in Geneva. He got much more attention through that incident.

■ Let's go back and talk about the proposed international conference. Are you assuming that when such a conference meets that what it will meet to discuss is mutual recognition, a Palestinian State next to the Israeli State, security arrangements, international guarantees. Is that the general framework within which you continue to think about these issues?

● In my opinion it should in the first place deal with the implementation of resolution 242. It contains all the necessary elements. Most of all it recognises the existence of the State of Israel in secure and recognised boundaries on the one hand, also the need to respect the right of self-determination for the Palestinians although it is true it isn't worded in such a clear way.

Resolution 242

You'll remember that there was also a long debate before 242 was accepted by the Arab countries because of the wording of the resolution that the Palestinians were dealt with as refugees. And Palestinians supported by the Arabs opposed this wording and said that its a highly political question.

And I also remember when I had to deal with some of the Arab countries, they told me when we had to deal with the mandate for the UN forces on the Golan Heights, how can we continue to accept the UN forces on our territory.

■ But do you see any political solution without a Palestinian State? Is it realistic to be talking about any kind of solution without a Palestinian State?

● No, this is certainly the key question, the main issue....

■ You've already recognised the Palestinian declaration of Statehood. I meant to ask you, did you treat Arafat as a Head of State when he came here?

● Well, I told you that the Austrian government recognised the declaration but not the State as such, because the State doesn't exist yet...

■ Well, how did you treat him? ● Well...we found the right approach... He was received with dignity and with respect...But...I think it was a sort of middle way that we adopted.

■ Please let me ask one final question, a difficult question because it's from this part of the world from 50 years ago. You know I'm personally Jewish and often go to Israel. There are Israelis who are speaking up much more loudly than others in the world because they have reached the conclusion that the Israelis and the Israeli Army are

want to show their understanding for the wish of the Israelis to have their own state and not to lose what they have gotten after World War Two. The Europeans hesitate to speak out on a number of issues in this connection.

Of course what happens in the occupied territories—what we see and have seen with regard to civilians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, brutal methods used by the Israeli forces... We have seen it.

This is the new element that I was impressed to see on American television and European television—that all this was shown on the news. This didn't happen before. This is a new development. And it has created here in Europe, since you asked me about Europe, it has created great uneasiness. And of course there was condemnation of such actions.

But I think these developments show again how important it is to negotiate, to bring the two sides together. And I think this is what most of the European countries wish to happen. And I think also the two superpowers.

Of course America is in a special situation because of this special relationship with Israel. But I think the Russians also want to do something.

■ But the irony is that when you had a Jewish Chancellor your country was much more involved in criticising the Israelis and much more involved in trying to bring the two sides together...

● Maybe he was in a better position. You've just mentioned that there's more opposition by the Jews against those methods applied by the Israeli government than from European leaders. Well I tried to explain to you the psychological reasons for that. And Kreisky was in a better position to react in the way he did.

■ Thank you very very much. I appreciate your talking about these questions; I appreciate the chance to be here with you.



Kriesky