

Fostering peace through dialogue

The international social democratic movement and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

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The Socialist International (SI), the worldwide forum of the socialist, social democratic, and labor parties, actively looked for a solution to the Jewish-Palestinian conflict in the 1980s. At that time, the Israeli Labour Party still was the leading political force in Israel, as it had been historically since the foundation of the country. The Labour Party was also an active member of the SI. The Party's leader, Shimon Peres, was one of its vice-presidents. At the same time, the social democratic parties were the leading political force in Western Europe. Several important European leaders, many of them presidents and prime ministers, were involved in the SI's work. They included personalities such as Willy Brandt of Germany; former president of the SI, Francois Mitterrand of France; James Callaghan of Great Britain; Bruno Kreisky of Austria; Bettini Craxi of Italy; Felipe Gonzalez of Spain; Mario Soares of Portugal; Joop de Uyl of the Netherlands; Olof Palme of Sweden; Kalevi Sorsa of Finland; Anker Jørgensen of Denmark; and Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway—all of whom are former vice-presidents of the SI. As a result, in the 1980s, the SI in many ways represented Europe in global affairs, despite the existence of the European Community (which did not yet have well-defined common foreign policy objectives).

After the Second World War, a clear majority of European social democrats maintained a favorable attitude toward Israel and the right of Jews to establish their own state in Palestine. In contrast, the rights of the Palestinians were recognized but only superficially discussed. Regarding the conflict between Jews and Arabs, the sympathies leaned heavily toward the Jews. In those days, an important factor influencing attitudes in Europe was the tremendous suffering of Jews during the Second World War. Europeans were familiar with Jews, who have been living on the continent for centuries; yet they were unfamiliar with Arabs and Palestinians. Moreover, the SI had no members from the Arab world. Thus, Palestinian claims had less of an impact than Israeli claims.

With the conflict escalating in terms of violence and human suffering, the SI was forced to pay more attention to the Palestinians and contrib-



ute to the political process of finding solutions. A precondition for such a process was that all parties concerned, the Israelis and the Palestinians in particular, were involved. To do so, the SI's approach had to be more balanced. Primarily, it had to recognize that both the Israelis and the Palestinians had the same right to their own state.

Israel seemed to be in a stronger position in the conflict. It had taken land from the Palestinians. A large number of Palestinians had been thrown out of their homes and driven to exile or refugee camps. In military terms, Israel was overwhelmingly stronger, relying also on the unre-served political and material support of the United States. The U.S. policy in the Middle East seemed to have been directed, to a large extent, by the domestic influential Jewish community in the United States. No U.S. president, or presidential hopeful, wanted a conflict with the community. Consequently, the United States has provided for the military superiority of Israel in the region. In contrast, support, given by the Arab and other states to the Palestinians, has been nowhere near the levels that Israel has received from its friends, particularly the United States.

Originally, the Palestinian position did not recognize Israel as a state and denied its right to exist. Palestinians adopted armed struggle as their main means to reach their goals. In Israel and elsewhere, in the West in particular, this armed struggle was seen as terrorism. This classification was rooted in military actions taken by the Palestinians, which often randomly targeted civilians. Yet, Israeli armed operations were not always clean either. Politically, Palestinians were split. However, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasser Arafat and his party, Al Fatah, was, by far, the most representative organization.

In the late 1970s, attempts occurred within the SI to launch both a dialogue between Israelis and Palestinian leaders and a political process for peace. In the beginning, the most active personality in this movement was the veteran leader of the Austrian socialists and the federal chancellor (prime minister) of Austria, Bruno Kreisky. Kreisky was very critical of the policies of Israel and its Labour Party, and he suggested talks with the PLO.

In the Israeli Labour Party, Kreisky's activities were first received with resentment and later with reservation. In particular, the Israeli Labour Party found it impossible to talk to the PLO, as Mr. Kreisky suggested. For the Labour Party, it would have been political suicide. Additionally, such contacts would have been illegal according to the Israeli Criminal Act. The Israeli Labour Party also insisted that the SI should not have such contacts either. In private conversations, members did recognize that a solution could not be dictated to the Palestinians on Israeli conditions only. However, in reality, their policies seemed to be trying to do just that. Also,

Israel could not find a credible and representative Palestinian negotiation partner. For all these reasons, a political peace process did not and could not exist.

Over time, however, Shimon Peres, the leader of the Israeli Labour Party, started seriously to discuss in public the need for a representative Palestinian negotiation partner. A precondition to negotiations was, however, that the Palestinian partner recognize Israel and refrain from acts of terrorism. The PLO did not accept these conditions, and other negotiation partners could not be found because of the widespread Palestinian support for this organization.

There were disagreements within the SI as to whether the talks should be postponed until the PLO changed its policies or whether the talks should start without any preconditions. Without a doubt, SI agreed with Shimon Peres on the recognition of Israel's right to exist and the condemnation of terrorism. Those were, indeed, preconditions to an agreement and to peace. But were they preconditions to contacts and talks? (The Israeli Labour Party adhered to this point of view.) Most of the SI parties seemed to be moving in another direction. They felt that dialogue must not wait. Talks with the PLO on all issues should start as soon as possible without any preconditions on either side. Issues of recognition and terrorism should definitely be on the agenda.

The PLO was not united on all issues. It was a front of competing organizations and tendencies. The SI wanted to support the constructive options. It also wanted to talk to those who had real influence. Bruno Kreisky felt that we should start to talk to Yasser Arafat himself. In the initial contacts, Yasser Arafat expressed his wish to have contacts with the SI and its member parties. He saw them mostly as an important European political force.

The Bureau of the SI met in Lisbon on 30–31 October 1979. The Bureau was separate from the SI's congresses, the organization's most important body. All member parties were invited. At that meeting, Willy Brandt and Bruno Kreisky reported on their talks with Yasser Arafat. The three men had met on 8 July that year. Brandt and Kreisky had wanted to find out whether there would be any possibility that the attitudes inside the PLO would change. Could the PLO accept Israel's right to exist? After their talks, Brandt and Kreisky concluded that such development was going on and the process should be supported. They felt that contacts with Arafat would also be useful in the future. At the same time, they emphasized that the SI felt solidarity with its member, the Israeli Labour Party.

Shimon Peres, who was present, disapproved of the action taken by Willy Brandt and Bruno Kreisky. He was supported by the representative

of the British Labour Party, Ian Mikardo. According to Mikardo, who was a member of the Labour Friends of Israel, a pro-Israel lobby inside his own party, social democrats must not talk to terrorists, but support Israel.

There was no vote on this matter, but the majority of the SI parties present seemed to support the action taken by Brandt and Kreisky. Therefore, contacts between the SI and the PLO were established, and they became permanent, albeit informal.

The Israeli Labour Party went on opposing the contacts. Their opposition was, at least to a large extent, motivated by domestic policy concerns. Shimon Peres and the leadership of the Party were fully aware that the PLO could not be superseded. But the idea of negotiating with the enemy was very unpopular in Israel. Therefore, the Party also had to oppose the SI's contacts with the PLO. This opposition, however, was qualified. They could live with the SI's and its member parties' PLO contacts, and even a PLO presence in the SI meetings, as long as the PLO was not given an official and recognized status. If the PLO representative was not mentioned in the official list of participants and was not given the floor in the statutory meetings, the Labour Party did not protest. They might even have quietly agreed to it, since the SI contacts would work in both directions. They were also regarded as a way to influence the PLO.

However, the PLO also acted. Yasser Arafat appointed his representative to liaise with the SI. The new liaison officer was Issam Sartawi, who worked in the PLO office in Paris. He took his work very seriously and started actively establishing contacts with the SI and its European parties. I remember well his visit to Helsinki in early 1980. He came on his own initiative. We had a long conversation, and he impressed me. At the time, I was the international secretary of the Finnish Social Democratic Party. While on a North European tour, Sartawi met me and my colleagues from other countries.

Sartawi ensured a permanent presence in all major SI meetings. The SI secretariat in London seems to have kept him informed about them. The Israeli Labour Party did oppose his official presence since he openly represented the PLO. Therefore, he was never officially invited to meetings, and his name did not appear on the official list of participants. Nor was he able to take the floor during debates. However, he was present and actively lobbying delegates. It was generally understood that Sartawi reported directly to Yasser Arafat. In this way, an informal contact and dialogue with the PLO did exist.

Concerning the issues of the recognition of Israel and terrorism, Sartawi always answered unclearly. That was the best he could do. He knew the views of the social democrats. These were the same points on which

the PLO was not united. There were different approaches. Even the realistic and moderate Palestinians, and Sartawi was one of them, felt that in these sensitive issues the Palestinians could make concessions to Israel only when, and if, Israel would make concessions, too. Israel would not be recognized without a price.

The disagreement about Sartawi's status, which characterized the SI's relations to the PLO, became a major issue at the SI Congress in Albufeira, Portugal, on 7–10 April 1983. The SI secretariat in London had sent an invitation to the PLO. Prior to the Congress, the then secretary general, Bernt Carlsson (Sweden), had consultations with a large number of parties. After these consultations, he felt that a large enough number of them were in favor of such an invitation. One of those in favor was the host of the Congress, the Portuguese Socialist Party. Apparently the president of the SI, Willy Brandt, had not been sufficiently informed about the matter.

In Albufeira, Shimon Peres strongly opposed the invitation and protested. He also considered that the procedure had been incorrect and, therefore, the invitation was invalid. He appealed to Willy Brandt who proposed a compromise that was then approved. The PLO was not invited, but Issam Sartawi was invited as a Palestinian personality. This was also approved, even if reluctantly, by the Israelis. They could live with a solution as long as the PLO as an organization was not officially recognized, not even as a guest in a meeting.

Sartawi was given the floor. He decided to ignore Brandt's compromise, and he gave thanks for the invitation extended "to the PLO." He had, indeed, decided not to acknowledge the change of his status. His speech was interesting. Sartawi thanked the SI for opening contacts with the PLO, mentioning Bruno Kreisky and his efforts. He asked the SI to support a just and honorable peace in the Middle East. He also asked the SI to take a balanced and fair approach to both parties in the conflict. He insisted that both nations, Jews and Palestinians, have a right to a state of their own. By saying so, he indirectly recognized Israel's right to exist. He did the same again by declaring that the PLO supported the Brezhnev Plan. This plan included the idea of establishing two states in Palestine. He also called for a negotiated solution, which could have been understood as a reference to the need to refrain from violence, including terrorism.

After this speech, Issam Shartawi had only two more days to live. On the morning of the last day of the Congress, 10 April 1983, the SI Bureau held a closed session. In this session, it formulated its recommendations for the elections of the president, the vice-presidents, and the secretary general of the SI, which were to take place immediately afterward in a plenary session. Guests, including Sartawi, journalists, and others were at the hotel lobby waiting for the Bureau to finish and for the plenary ses-

sion to start. Suddenly, there were noises close to the door. The noises and disturbance spread across the hall like a wave. Brandt, who was chairing the meeting, seemed to lose control of the session. He said helplessly: "I don't know what is happening." Somebody ran to him and spoke in his ear. Brandt grew pale. "I have just been informed that Dr. Sartawi has been murdered." The meeting was adjourned.

A couple of minutes earlier, Sartawi had been in the hotel lobby some 50 meters away. Someone had entered the lobby, approached Sartawi, and shot him dead. Then the murderer ran away, avoiding the bullets of the Portuguese police.

We do not know for sure who was responsible for this act. A man was charged for the murder but there was not enough evidence to sentence him. There have been speculations that the murder was committed by Mossad, the Israeli security service. A much more likely culprit would be any of the radical Palestinian groups. Actually, Abu Nidal did declare that they carried out the operation. This certainly is one possibility, but there are also others, because Sartawi was viewed to be a traitor by radical Palestinians.

In spite of the tragic incident, the SI Congress proceeded according to its program. Some of us, including President Willy Brandt, Vice-President Shimon Peres, and I presented commemorations to Sartawi. In his short speech, Shimon Peres condemned the murder of Sartawi declaring that the bullets which killed him "were aimed at moderation."

The SI had established a number of working-groups or committees to deal with different political issues. The Socialist International Middle East Committee (SIMEC) was in charge of responses to Middle East conflicts; Mario Soares, the former leader of the Portuguese Socialists, and Hans Jurgen Wischnewsky, a German representative, chaired this committee at the time.

SIMEC wanted to develop a more extensive dialogue with the PLO and to help open more political channels between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The final goal was direct talks and agreements between Israel and the PLO. However, The SI did not really try to be a mediator. We wanted to create political will and political pressure to start serious negotiations, or a process. We wanted to build bridges by discussing a framework for a just and lasting solution, which would include two states, one for the Jews and one for the Palestinians.

The Israeli Labour Party held a positive attitude toward SIMEC and its work. The international secretary of the Party, Israel Gat, was a regular and active participant in the meetings. However, we needed to make sure that SIMEC would not alienate the Labour Party. Without their positive participation, our work would have been useless. The main disagree-

ment between the Israeli Labour Party and the rest of SIMEC continued to concern the role of the PLO. In this matter, we tried to understand the domestic policy requirements of our Israeli friends. As Israel Gat once put it: "You cannot expect us to walk faster than we can," meaning that Israel could not accept talks or official contacts with the PLO as long as the PLO did not recognize Israel and condemn and stop terrorism. However, the rest of SIMEC felt that the talks should start without any preconditions, and the PLO's recognition of Israel and condemnation of terrorism should be high on the agenda of these talks.

In February 1987, SIMEC met in Lisbon. The PLO had been invited to this meeting despite the Israeli Labour Party's protests, which were subdued because SIMEC was a committee established by the Bureau and not a decision-making body of the SI. Such committees had already created a practice of meeting with outsiders. Inviting the PLO was in line with this practice. It was also agreed that the representative of the PLO would participate in the meeting only when his statement was on the agenda. This made it possible for the Israeli representative to be present during the rest of the meeting. Had the Israeli representative been present together with a PLO representative, he/she would have been prosecuted at home for a criminal offense. The PLO was represented by Ilan Halewi, Sartawi's replacement, who also worked in the PLO office in Paris.

At the same meeting, another point on the agenda concerned widening contacts with the Palestinians. The Israeli Labour Party had suggested that the SI invite Faiz Abu Rahme and Hana Siniora, two prominent Palestinian personalities, to its next Council (in 1986 the name "Bureau" had been changed to "Council") meeting. They were well-known and outspoken Palestinians whose views were those of the PLO. However, they were not, at least not in public, PLO members. This proposal was approved, and both representatives attended the SI Council meeting in Rome in April 1987.

In 1988, I met the PLO chairman Yasser Arafat in Tunis in my role as the secretary general of the SI. The meeting lasted about an hour without any new outcomes. When I later talked to Shimon Peres about the meeting, to my surprise, I received no criticism. Mr. Peres asked whether Arafat had sent any messages to him. I had to tell him that this was not the case. Mr. Peres was disappointed. So was I.

The Israeli Labour Party once successfully used SIMEC for its own political purposes. After the SIMEC meeting in Lisbon, Israel Gat contacted me. The Labour Party, dissatisfied with Soviet Union policies in the Middle East, wanted contacts with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The Soviet Union, which had been the first country in the world

to recognize the state of Israel, had broken diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. According to the Labour Party, the Soviet Union unilaterally supported Arabs, the Palestinians in particular. The Party felt that this was an obstacle to peace efforts. The Labour Party hoped that the Soviet Union would take a more balanced and constructive approach and make a positive impact. A precondition, they argued, was that the diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel needed to be restored. The Israeli Labour Party wanted to discuss the matter with the CPSU. The party channel was, in this case, better than the official governmental channel. The Labour Party asked the SI to help. They suggested that SIMEC should make an effort and use the SI's relations to Moscow to establish contact. We knew that the CPSU was, in general, willing to talk to us. Hans-Jurgen Wischnewsky and I got interested. We talked to President Willy Brandt who encouraged us to try to open this dialogue. The CPSU agreed to discuss the matter, and we were welcomed to Moscow.

Wischnewsky and I visited Moscow in March 1988. Our discussion partners included Vadim Zagladin and Karen Brutens. Mr. Zagladin was a member of the Central Committee and the first deputy director of the International Department of the CPSU. Brutens was another deputy director of the Department. Thus, we were received at a reasonably high political level, which was an encouraging political signal.

The talks were rather general. Our Soviet counterparts presented their views as expected, and we presented ours. The Soviet criticism of Israel was perhaps milder than we had expected. We suggested a meeting between the CPSU and the Israeli Labour Party. We told our counterparts that the Labour Party would like to meet and discuss the restoration of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Soviet Union. There was no immediate answer, which was natural. Of course, the Soviets needed time to consider their response. They possibly also wanted to consult some of their Arab friends, including the PLO. They did not want to harm such relations.

Wischnewsky and I also invited the CPSU to the next meeting of SIMEC in Rome in April 1988 in conjunction with the SI Council. We informed the Soviets that Shimon Peres would be in Rome attending the Council, so would two prominent Palestinians, Faiz Abu Rahme and Hana Siniora, as well as Ilan Halewi of the PLO, even if he was not officially invited. The CPSU could not be invited to the Council, as such an invitation would have been a sensitive and difficult matter. However, we made it clear that if they were in Rome, they would be able to follow the Council meeting and be invited to social functions. The CPSU accepted the invitation.

Karen Brutens, accompanied by Alexander Zotov, an expert on the Middle East, arrived to Rome. They attended SIMEC where they partici-

pated in the debate. In the Council, they had seats in the hall, but their names were not on the official list of participants, and they did not participate in the debates.

Shimon Peres was present, too. He was followed by a large group of Israeli journalists. At home, he made an issue about his meeting with a senior representative of the CPSU. Brutens, on the contrary, seemed to be irritated by the publicity. Unlike Peres, he did not seek a high public profile. Some Arabs and Palestinians did not like his presence in Rome.

On the conference premises, I had reserved a larger than normal office. This time it had to be able to accommodate an unusually large meeting. Shimon Peres, Israel Gat, Karen Brutens, and Alexander Zotov met. Only Israelis and Soviets were present. Consequently, I do not know any details of the discussions, but after the meeting, the participants looked pleased.

Later, Shimon Peres spoke in the Council. He commented positively on his talks with Brutens. He emphasized that the Soviet Union must participate in the Middle East peace process. He felt that the Soviet Union could have a constructive role in the region only after it normalized relations with all parties in the conflict, including Israel. He sought the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Similarly, Mr. Peres pointed out that there were differences between the Israeli and Soviet views. He criticized the Soviet Union for its treatment of Jews and for its opinion about who should represent the Palestinians. I assume that Brutens and Zotov also met with Faiz Abu Rahme, Hana Siniora, and Ilan Halewi.

The SI's efforts to build bridges between Israel and the Soviet Union represent a successful operation. These efforts, however, went for naught for two reasons. First, when we opened channels between the Israeli Labour Party and the CPSU, the former was in a coalition government. Following the disintegration of the coalition government, the Labour Party found itself in opposition when a new government coalition was formed in 1990. Second, the SI's efforts to bring together Israel and the Soviet Union were obviously harmed by the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the disappearance of the CPSU. Nevertheless, as Simon Peres had hoped, relations between Israel and the Soviet Union, later Russia, were restored through the SI-led dialogue. That was most useful.

Hans-Jurgen Wishnewski and I went to the West Bank to meet PLO chairman, Yasser Arafat. This time the talks were more extensive and concrete than my previous ones in Tunis. Still, there was no breakthrough. We were not exactly disappointed since we did not expect any concessions.

During the delicious traditional Palestinian dinner, our host, Arafat, asked me whether the PLO could join the SI. The question was probably

not a serious one, but I had to provide an answer. I pointed out that, according to its structure and nature, the PLO was not a political party but a front for several parties and organizations. These parties and organizations represented different political tendencies, not necessarily social democratic ones. The SI, however, was an organization of social democratic parties. Arafat took the point, but he did not give up. "What about Al Fatah? It is a political party. Can Al Fatah join?" Arafat argued that Al Fatah's membership would also be in the SI's interest. The SI has an Israeli member. To have a Palestinian member as well would, according to him, make the SI more balanced. I responded by explaining the membership application procedures. If Al Fatah would apply, the application would be considered. If Al Fatah would be considered a political party representing social democracy, it could be accepted. That was the end of the conversation. Al Fatah did not send an application.

SIMEC met in Strasbourg on 15 April 1988. Hans-Jurgen Wishnewski had to cancel his participation on short notice, and so I chaired the meeting on his behalf. A PLO delegation was present again, headed by Khaleen El Hassan, the head of the International Departments of the PLO and Al Fatah. The delegation also included Chawqi El Armaly, the PLO representative to the European Economic Community (EEC)/ European Union (EU), and Ilan Halewi. Because of their presence, the Israeli Labour Party decided not to come to Strasbourg. The smaller Israeli member of the SI, Mifleget ha-Po'alim ha-Me'uhe det (MAPAM), was present.

Two European foreign ministers, Peter Jankowitsch of Austria and Sten Andersson of Sweden, were among the participants. Peter Jankowitsch was, at the same time, the international secretary of the Austrian Socialist Party, and Sten Andersson was the former secretary general of the Swedish Social Democrats. They both had been active in the SI. The presence of the foreign ministers was significant. It was time to involve European governments. We needed their support, and they could benefit from our work.

Sten Andersson then started to work in earnest. He was closely assisted by his cabinet secretary Pierre Schorie, the former international secretary of the Party. It was during the talks initiated by the Swedish government that Yasser Arafat made a statement recognizing Israel's right to exist, and he denounced terrorism. This brought about a successful peace process and an agreement between Israel and the PLO. After the Swedish Social Democrats lost their national elections, the Norwegian Social Democratic Government took over as mediator. Their work led to an agreement in Oslo. The United States and President Bill Clinton then made an important and successful effort to follow up on this foundation.

Following these important achievements, the peace process has seen serious setbacks. The problem seems to be that among both the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians there is deep distrust, bitterness, and fear of the other. In both camps, there are extremists feeding each other. The more constructive forces in both camps are defensive in nature, and they have lost ground. The spiral of violence continues.

In spite of these difficulties and setbacks, there are no good alternatives for improved dialogue. Also, the United States has a major role and responsibility. It is essential that the United States continues with the more constructive lines of Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. The United States has the right to guarantee the security of Israel. However, it should not be done through means that create suffering for Palestinians. The United States should wave the stick at and offer the carrot to both participants in the conflict.

It is necessary to stop the Israeli policy of building new settlements on Palestinian land. This policy has already gone far, too far, and it is an obstacle to the peace process. It is a great injustice and further marginalizes the Palestinians, understandably causing bitterness. Furthermore, it makes the two-states solution more difficult.

The SI, like the rest of the international community, insisted that both the Jews and the Palestinians have their own state. It is difficult to build two states on a small territory, but there is no sensible alternative. The present situation, where we have Israel, the Jewish state, and some territories for the Palestinians, including the West Bank and Gaza, does not represent a sustainable solution. These territories do not fulfill the requirements of international law concerning states. A state must have (1) people, (2) a territory, and (3) a government. Palestine has people: the Palestinians. There is territory: the West Bank and Gaza (though the borders are disputed). However, there is no government, only weak local authorities, which can be, and often are, easily undermined by Israel.

The creation of a Palestinian state is very much in the interest of not only the Palestinians but also the state of Israel, which could achieve more by dealing with a foreign government that would have to respect binding international obligations rather than with a local authority that does not really control its territory. In this case, even a weak and unfriendly state would be better than no state at all.

Currently, Israel's argument against two states is based on security needs, which, according to proponents, create a need for a greater Israel, composed of the State of Israel and territories that, in many ways, are already under direct or indirect Israeli control.

At present, controlling Gaza means isolation, which might turn against Israel one day. Controlling the whole area will not succeed forever.

In a few decades, there will be more Palestinians than Jews. Demographic trends do not favor the Israelis, and they will experience significant consequences. To control the area will require more and more apartheid from Israel. It will build up to a conflict where relative strength between the two communities is not favorable to Israel. It will intensify the conflict. Nobody can be sure that Israelis will come out of this conflict as well as the South African whites emerged from theirs. As a result, Israel should actively and quickly work for a Palestinian state. The alternative, the maintenance of a singular state for both Israelis and Palestinians, might in a few decades achieve the original Al Fatah and PLO goal: a single state covering all of Palestine. However, that would not be a Jewish state but a multinational state with a Palestinian majority and a Jewish minority. In the long run, that might be a good solution, but getting there would be rough, full of conflicts and human sufferings.

The international community should play a more active role in the process. At present, Israel is showing signs of isolationism. This is a dangerous development. Integration would bring benefits, including more security. So far, Israel has often rejected the United Nations (UN). That may have been understandable to some extent. I was myself attending the UN General Assembly in 1975 when it passed the famous Zionism-racism resolution. I was happy that my own delegation voted against it. The resolution may have harmed Israel as its supporters had hoped. However, it also harmed the UN and the Palestinian cause. The real loser was the peace process. Israeli-UN relations should be restored. Israel should also consider its attitudes toward Europe and the European Union. Israel needs Europe. It cannot survive without international friends beyond the United States. For years, the Socialist International followed its mission of fostering international peace by organizing negotiations with world leaders. In many ways, it was ahead of its time, as it played a role presently occupied by the European Union. While the SI encountered many obstacles to its work in establishing peace processes in regions such as the Middle East, its successes demonstrate the potential benefits international actors can bring to conflict areas when they adopt a balanced approach and a measured response.

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