

Karl Kahane Stiftung: „Gespräche für den Frieden“

Amos Oz

Kamingespräch mit anschließendem Abendessen

am Sonntag, 13. März 2005 um 19.30 Uhr

Zur Person:

Amos Oz wurde 1939 in Jerusalem als Amos Klausner geboren, trat 1954 dem Kibbuz Chulda bei, wo er den Namen „Oz“ (hebr. Kraft, Stärke) annahm. Nach seinem Militärdienst studierte Oz von 1960-63 Literatur und Philosophie an der hebräischen Universität in Jerusalem und arbeitete, nach Abschluss des Studiums mit dem B.A., im Kibbuz als Schriftsteller, Lehrer und in der Landwirtschaft. Zwischen 1961-63 veröffentlichte Oz erste Kurzgeschichten in der Literaturzeitschrift „Keshet“.

1967 kämpfte Amos Oz während des Sechs-Tage-Krieges auf dem Sinai und 1973 während des Jom-Kippur-Krieges auf den Golan-Höhen. Seitdem hat er sich in zahlreichen Aufsätzen und Artikeln für einen Kompromiss zwischen Israelis und Palästinensern ausgesprochen und wurde Mitbegründer und herausragender Vertreter von „Schalom achschaw“ („Peace Now“). 1986 verließ Amos Oz mit seiner Familie den Kibbuz und lebt seither in Arad in der Wüste Negev. 1993 wurde ihm der Agnon-Lehrstuhl für hebräische Literatur der Ben-Gurion-Universität in Beer Sheva übergeben.

Oz ist Träger zahlreicher Auszeichnungen (Auswahl): Friedenspreis des deutschen Buchhandels, Israel-Preis für Literatur, Preis der Geschwister-Korn-und-Gerstenmann-Stiftung, Preis des Senders France Culture für ausländische Literatur, *WELT*-Literaturpreis. Am 14. März wird Amos Oz den Bruno Kreisky Preis für das politische Buch erhalten.

Veröffentlichungen in deutscher Übersetzung (Auswahl): *Eine Geschichte von Liebe und Finsternis* (Suhrkamp Verlag 2004), *Wie man Fanatiker kuriert* (edition suhrkamp, Suhrkamp Verlag 2004), *Allein das Meer* (Suhrkamp Verlag 2002), *Ein anderer Ort* (Suhrkamp Verlag 2001), *Sumchi* (Suhrkamp Verlag 2001), *Das Schweigen des Himmels. Über S.J. Agnon* (Suhrkamp Verlag 1998), *Nenn die Nacht nicht Nacht* (Suhrkamp Verlag 1995), *Bericht zur Lage des Staates Israel* (Suhrkamp Verlag 1992), *Der perfekte Frieden* (Insel Verlag 1987).

Rudolf Scholten

Ich möchte Sie und euch alle sehr herzlich willkommen heißen zu dieser Veranstaltung im Rahmen der Karl Kahane Stiftung. Ich begrüße sehr herzlich Patricia Kahane und bedanke mich, dass wir die Veranstaltungen im Rahmen der Karl Kahane Stiftung, die hier im Haus Tradition haben, fortsetzen können. Und ich begrüße Alfred Gusenbauer, herzlich willkommen. Following the lines of our invitation I would like to welcome first of all the guest of honor of tonight, Mr. Amos Oz, welcome. Following the lines of courtesy, I would first like to welcome Danielle Spera who took the role as a host for our discussion tonight, welcome. And following the rules of protocol I should first welcome the new ambassador of Israel in Austria. Hannes Swoboda wird morgen den Bruno Kreisky Preis überreichen, willkommen. Einer Hausregel nach, die wir jetzt erfinden, um ehrlich zu sein, möchte ich Fini Steindling herzlich begrüßen, die nämlich das jüngste Mitglied unseres Sponsorenkreises ist. Danke sehr.

Mr. Oz is one of the icons of the world literature of today and at the same time he is one of the respected and most convincing voices on peace options for the Middle East conflict questions. Sometimes you get the feeling that he is suffering, that he cannot really keep apart these two worlds. In particular when you talk to people about his books, they are quite often considered as if they would have a hidden political agenda. And he writes himself about his work that, “people read politics into whatever I write. A very innocent story I might write about a father, and a mother, and a daughter and pocket money would be read as an allegory about the government, religion, the younger generation and the decaying economy.” To confirm this problem I found a review about one of his books and it finishes by saying, “this novel is a piece of sweet, but melancholic chamber music. It belongs to a genre of restful novel that is fueled by an aesthetic of peace. If one is looking for politics there it is, clearly if quietly.” When Mr. Oz is talking about politics he takes a very pragmatic, but

still demanding position vis-à-vis the acting politicians. Recently he said that the leaders on both sides are cowards. “Both Sharon and Abbas realise that there can be no progress before the extremists are contained and overruled. Yet each of these leaders wants the other to launch an internal civil war while he just sits and watches. Each of these leaders wants the internal battle to take place inside the other’s family. But it will be almost impossible for these two leaders to run away now from the peace process.” And then he is quite often quoted with a picture of literature to demonstrate his political vision. He says that reconciliation between the Jews and Palestinians should be Tschechovian with everybody a little disappointed, so that it won’t be Shakespearean with bodies littering the stage. Welcome again to the Bruno Kreisky Forum.

Danielle Spera

Danke Rudolf. It is a great honor for all of us to be here tonight. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to moderate this evening. The reason for your being in Vienna is your new book, *A Story of Love and Darkness*, which is definitely one of the best books I have ever read. It is a very personal, very complex, and above all it is a very moving book. It made me laugh a lot, but it also made me cry, and I got addicted. Once I had started I could never stop. It not only tells the story of your roots, the story of your family members who came from Warsaw to then Palestine. It is also – and I know you don’t like this word – a biography of Israel. Batya Gur calls it the national biography of Israel. I would take the liberty to read a short episode before we start to talk.

“Jahrelang hatten wir ein festes Arrangement für die Telefonverbindung mit der Familie in Tel Aviv. Alle drei oder vier Monate riefen wir sie an, obwohl weder wir noch sie ein Telefon hatten. Als erstes schrieben wir einen Brief an Tante Haja (?) und Onkel Zwi, um ihnen mitzuteilen, am 19. des Monats, das ist der Mittwoch, rufen wir um 5 Uhr nachmittags von unserer Apotheke in eurer Apotheke an. Der Brief wurde lange im voraus abgeschickt, und dann warteten wir auf Antwort. In dem Antwortbrief versicherten und Tante Haja (?) und Onkel Zwi, Mittwoch der 19. sei ihnen sehr recht und sie würden selbstverständlich kurz vor 5 in der Apotheke sein, aber wir sollten uns keinerlei Sorgen machen, falls es bei uns etwas nach 5 würde, sie liefen bestimmt nicht weg. Ich weiss nicht mehr, ob wir für den Gang zur Apotheke zu Ehren des Telefongesprächs nach Tel Aviv unsere besten Kleider anzogen, aber es würde nicht nicht wundern. Es war ein feierliches Unternehmen. Schon am Sonntag davor sagte Vater zur Mutter, „Fanja, denkst du daran, dass wir diese Woche in Tel Aviv anrufen?“ Am Montag sagte Mutter, „Arie, komm übermorgen bitte nicht zu spät nach Hause, damit nichts schief geht“. Und am Dienstag sagten beide zu mir, „Amos bereite uns bloss keine Überraschung, werde uns nicht krank, hörst du, erkälte dich nicht und fall nicht hin bis morgen nachmittag.“ Am Dienstag Abend sagten sie zu mir, „geh früh schlafen, damit du morgen am Telefon in Form bist, du sollst dich nicht so anhören, als hättest du nicht genug gegessen.“ So steigerten sie die Erregung. Wir wohnten in der Amos-Strasse und bis zur Apotheke in der Zefania-Strasse waren es zu Fuss gerade einmal 5 Minuten. Aber schon um 3 Uhr sagte Vater zu Mutter, „bitte fang jetzt nichts neues mehr an, damit du nicht in Zeitnot gerätst. Bei mir ist alles in Ordnung, aber du mit deinen Büchern, vergiss es über ihnen nicht völlig. Ich vergessen? Ich schaue doch alle paar Minuten auf die Uhr, und Amos wird mich erinnern.“ Da bin ich gerade einmal 5 oder 6 Jahre alt und schon wird mir historische Verantwortung auferlegt. Eine Armbanduhr hatte ich nicht und so rannte ich alle paar Minuten in die Küche um nach zu sehen, was die Uhrzeit war. Und dann meldete ich wie beim Start eines Raumschiffs, noch 25 Minuten, noch 20, noch 15, noch zehneinhalb Minuten. Und wenn ich noch zehneinhalb Minuten verkündete, standen wir auf, schlossen die Wohnung sorgfältig ab, und machten uns zu dritt auf den Weg. Wenige Minuten später betraten wir die Apotheke und sagten, „guten Tag, Herr Heinemann, wie geht es Ihnen, wir sind zum Telefonieren gekommen.“ Er wusste natürlich, dass wir am Mittwoch kommen würden, um die Verwandten in Tel Aviv anzurufen. Aber trotzdem erinnerten wir ihn. „Wir sind gekommen, um unsere Verwandten in Tel Aviv anzurufen.“ Herr Heinemann erwiderte, „ja natürlich, nehmen Sie doch bitte Platz.“ Vater sagte, „ich wähle jetzt.“ Und Mutter sagte, „es ist noch zu früh Arie, es sind

noch ein paar Minuten vor der Zeit.“ Worauf er sagte, „ja, aber bis wir eine Verbindung bekommen, Mutter.“ „Ja, aber was ist, wenn wir zufällig sofort eine Verbindung bekommen und sie sind noch nicht da?“ Vater entgegnete, „in diesem Fall versuchen wir es einfach noch einmal.“ Und Mutter, „nein, sie werden sich Sorgen machen. Sie werden meinen, sie hätten uns verpasst.“ Während sie noch debattierten, war es beinahe 5.00 Uhr geworden. Vater hob den Hörer ab und sagte zu der Telefonistin, „Guten Tag meine Damen, ich hätte gerne Tel Aviv 648.“ Manchmal sagte die Telefonistin, „bitte warten Sie noch ein paar Minuten. Jetzt spricht gerade der Herr Postdirektor oder Herr Siton oder Herr Nashashili.“ Und wir wurden ein wenig nervös, denn was würde man dort von uns denken. Nach kurzem Warten beschloss Vater, dass der Herr Postdirektor oder Herr Nashashili ihr Gespräch beendet haben mussten, nahm wieder den Hörer auf und sagte zu der Telefonistin, „entschuldigen Sie meine Dame, wie mir scheint, hatte ich Tel Aviv 648 verlangt.“ Sie sagte, „ich habe es notiert mein Herr. Bitte warten Sie.“ Darauf Vater, „ich warte, meine Dame, selbstverständlich warte ich. Aber auch am anderen Ende warten Menschen.“ Das war seine Art, ihr höflich zu bedeuten, dass wir zwar kultivierte Menschen seien, unsere Selbstbeherrschung und Zurückhaltung aber auch ihre Grenzen hätten. Wir waren zwar wohl erzogene Leute, jedoch keine gutmütigen Trottel, keine Lämmer, die sich zur Schlachtbank führen liessen. Diese Geschichte, dass man Juden misshandeln und mit ihnen verfahren konnte, wie man wollte, die war ein für alle Mal vorbei. Dann klingelte plötzlich das Telefon in der Apotheke. Das war immer ein aufregender Ton, ein magischer Augenblick, und das Gespräch verlief ungefähr so. „Hallo Zwi“, „am Apparat“, „hier ist Arie aus Jerusalem“, „ja, Arie, Shalom, hier ist Zwi, wie geht es euch?“, „bei uns ist alles in Ordnung, wir sprechen von der Apotheke aus mit euch“, „wir auch, was gibt es neues?“, „es gibt nichts neues“, „wie ist es bei euch Zwi, was hast du zu erzählen?“, „alles in Ordnung, nichts neues, man lebt“, „keine Neuigkeiten sind gute Neuigkeiten, auch bei uns gibt es nichts neues, bei uns ist alles völlig in Ordnung, und was ist bei euch?“, „auch alles völlig in Ordnung“, „sehr gut, nun möchte Fania mit euch sprechen“. Und wieder das selbe, wie geht’s, was gibt es neues, und danach, „jetzt möchte auch Amos ein paar Worte sagen“. Und das war das ganze Gespräch: wie geht es euch, gut, nu dann werden wir bald wieder sprechen, gut euch zu hören, auch gut euch zu hören, wir werden schreiben und den nächsten Termin vereinbaren, wir werden sprechen, ja auf jeden Fall, bald, auf Wiedersehen und passt gut auf euch auf, alles Gute, euch auch. Aber es war nicht zum Lachen. Das Leben hing an einem seidenen Faden. Jetzt verstehe ich, dass sie ganz und gar nicht sicher waren, ob sie sich wirklich wieder sprechen würden oder nicht. Vielleicht war es das letzte Mal, denn wer weiss, was kommt. Unruhen, ein Progam, ein Blutbad, die Araber könnten sich erheben und uns alle abschlachten, ein Krieg könnte ausbrechen, ein grosses Unglück geschehen. Hitlers Panzer waren ja von zwei Seiten her, von Nordafrika und auch über den Kaukasus fast an unserer Schwelle angelangt. Wer weiss, was uns noch bevorstand. Dieses scheinbar leere Gespräch war keineswegs leer. Es war nur karg.“

Amos Oz

Thank you, thank you so much Dr. Scholten for your beautiful introduction and Danielle for your introduction and your reading. I don't understand German, but I think I laughed as well.

Ladies and Gentlemen, friends, good evening, Shalom, Erev Tov to all of you. It is very good to be here again. It is almost exactly ten years since my Palestinian friend Sari Nusseibeh and myself discussed the situation in the Middle East right here in this Bruno Kreisky Kibbutz, if I may call it so. This was in 1995. It was a time of a relative honeymoon between Israel and Palestine. Shortly after the Oslo Accords when everybody believed that although we still have a long way to walk everything will be fine. Ten difficult, complicated, bloody years have gone since. I think they have gone in vain because we, Israelis and Palestinians, are now exactly back where we were ten years ago, and in fact we are back to where we were 60 years ago. Personally I believe that in the end of the day when the state of Israel and the state of Palestine will co-exist next door to one another, not in love but in peace, not in mutual admiration but in decent neighborly relations, economy,

commerce, tourism, when this finally materialises, the first joint project which Israelis and Palestinians will have to conduct without any foreign aid from America, from Europe, from anywhere, a shared monument in which Israelis and Palestinians will have to invest exactly the same sum of money, equal sum of money, will have to be a monument to the mutual stupidity of the leaderships on both sides. Because once the two-state-solution is implemented the Palestinians will realise that they have achieved less than they could have achieved if they had accepted the partition UN resolution in 1947, 60 years ago, five wars ago, 150.000 dead ago – their dead and our dead. The Israelis will realise that they are going to get a lot less than we could have gotten if after our spectacular military victory in 1967 we were more pragmatic, more imaginative, more generous, and less intoxicated with military power. So we will have to build this monument for shared stupidity. But then what else is new? History is full of battles, and wars which in retrospect look redundant and unnecessary.

I am not going to give a lecture tonight, of course I keep my lecture for tomorrow night. But still as my introductory remarks I want to tell you that a Tale of Love and Darkness which I regard primarily as a novel, as a tale, not as a manifesto, not as a statement, not as a guidebook on how to make peace in the Middle East, is first and foremost a family story, the tale of my parents and my grandparents, the tale of the unrequited love of the Jews for Europe, one-sided love, a love that was not met with love. It is ironic and painful for me today to reflect on the fact that 70 or 80 years ago the only Europeans in the whole of Europe were my father and my mother, and my grandparents and other secular Jews like them. No one else in the whole of Europe was a European 80 years ago. Everyone was a Bulgarian patriot, a Swedish patriot, an Irish patriot. They were Europeans. They never regarded themselves as Russians, or Polish, or Lithuanian or whatever. They were Europeans. They loved everything to do with Europe, the languages. All of them were great polyglots. The heritage, the culture, the art, the landscape, the climate, the winter, the snow, the storms. They loved the forests. They loved the traditions, the folklore, and above all the music. They loved the music to the point of crying each time they were listening to European music. Unfortunately they were not loved back at all. For being Europeans they were labelled cosmopolitans, parasites, rootless intellectuals. And some of you may know that these pejoratives were the shared vocabulary of Nazis and communists. The same pejoratives, cosmopolitans, rootless intellectuals, parasites. My father, my mother, my grandparents. Yes, they brought with them to Jerusalem the unrequited love for Europe, just like those Jews who were kicked out of the Arab countries brought with them the unrequited love for Iraq, the unrequited love for Yemen, the unrequited love for Morocco and Tunisia.

Israel is a refugee camp. Palestine is a refugee camp. It is a tragic and painful conflict between two refugee camps, two former victims of Europe in two different ways. The Arabs through colonialism, imperialism, exploitation, humiliation. The Jews through persecution, rejection, and ultimately an unprecedented mass murder. Those two victims are engaged in a tragic battle. Many times I said, a battle between right and right. Recently I sometimes have to say, a battle between wrong and wrong. But essentially there is a certain European responsibility for this conflict. There is a certain European injustice inflicted both on the Palestinians and on the Jews, on the Arabs and on the Jews. And this injustice is partly in the root of this conflict, which means at least that it is wrong for Europe to focus on wagging the finger and expressing shock with the behavior of Israelis or Arabs, or both. It is wrong for Europe to behave like a theatre critic who is not satisfied with the quality of the performance. Or in worst cases I would say, it is wrong for Europe to behave like a 19th century Victorian governess, preaching morality to both sides. In the first place Europe is not exactly in a position to preach to anyone about moral conduct. May we remind the history of this continent. But also this is as counterproductive as can be. What both Israelis and Palestinians and other Arabs need right now more than anything is help, and empathy, and encouragement, and a sense of warmth coming their way because both sides will have to make the most painful decisions in their respective histories. It is not going to be a honeymoon. It is not going to be a scene out of a sentimental movie

with two long lost brothers hugging one another with tears saying, oh brother, please give me your love, take the land, who cares about the land, forgive me and give me your love. It is not going to happen. It is going to be a clenched teeth compromise with pain, and disappointment, and shattered dreams. And at this point in time both Israel and Palestine could use every gram, every ounce of empathy and help from Europe and from other parts of the world instead of the finger wagging and the moralising. The Palestinians will need help in resettling the refugees of 1948, not in Israel but in the state of Palestine. It is an undertaking, a serious undertaking. Israel will need serious security reassurances. Israel will need to feel that it has a family, that it is not alone in the world, that if indeed it goes back to its pre-1967 lines it will not remain some kind of isolated and vulnerable kind of removed and excommunicated community.

Here is a piece of good news for you, two pieces of good news. Because you are getting the bad news from the Middle East all the time. One piece of good news. The Israelis and the Palestinians know now that in the end of the day there will be a partition and a two-state-solution. Even those people on both side who don't like the idea. Even those people on both sides who think that this solution is unjust, or dangerous, or sub-religious. In their heart of hearts they know already that is going to happen. This is a piece of good news. The other piece of good news: You people, peace loving people, progressive people, peace seeking people everywhere, you no longer have to choose between being pro-Israel or pro-Palestine. You have to be pro-peace, and you can be pro-peace. This is my nutshell message. And I think we should better open up now for conversation, and discussion, and disagreement. I am used to it from home. Don't be too polite with me. Tell me what you think. And tell where you disagree. It will be unnatural if everybody agrees with me. I am not used to it.

Danielle Spera

Thank you so much. Just one question. You are very optimistic. But there a lot of obstacles, not talking about Jerusalem, the settlers, Temple Mound, whatever. How to cope with all the obstacles?

Oz

The obstacles, yes. I wouldn't say I am optimistic. I am too busy to be an optimist. To be an optimist or a pessimist is a luxury reserved for the outside public, for the spectators. When you have to be one of the doctors in the emergency room in the hospital you never ask yourself, am I optimistic or am I pessimistic. You ask yourself what to do next. I tell you what the obstacles are. I tell you in one word what the obstacles are: the fanatics on both sides. They are the obstacle. It is not the Temple Mount, it is not the borders, it is not the refugees. All of those issues can be resolved, and in fact have been resolved at least on an experimental scale in the Geneva Accords and the Nusseibeh/Ayalon document. In fact, we have reached a model peace agreement with our Palestinian pragmatic colleagues which covers all the disputed areas, refugees, boundaries, settlements, holy places, security, economy. The real obstacle is the existence of fanatics and at the moment desperate fanatics, both on the Palestinian side and on the Israeli side. There are differences between fanatics here and there. But I am not here in the business of giving you a professional seminary on fanaticism. The only way to combat against fanaticism is not with guns or weapons. There is no way you can launch a crusade against Jihad. This is where I think the United States of America have committed a major mistake by thinking that you can contain fanaticism by force alone. The way to contain, not to defeat but to contain fanaticism and to reduce it, is to inject hope, to create an atmosphere of hope. I think if the Palestinian refugees who have been rotting in the camps in dehumanising conditions for 60 years almost – and I am not going tonight into the question of who takes how much of the blame for the tragedy of the Palestinian refugees, the answer is, there is a Palestinian blame, and there is an Israeli blame, and there is a pan-Arabic blame for this tragedy. It does not matter at the moment. What matters now is that those people have to see the light. They have to see a beginning at least of a process in which they are taken out of the camps, out of the refugee camps into homes and jobs in the state of Palestine. They cannot move to the state of Israel

because if they are allowed to migrate to Israel there will be two Palestinian states and no one for the Jewish people. And although I am in favor of a Palestinian state next door to Israel, I am not in favor of two Palestinian states. But this is a crucial issue. If I were the prime minister of Israel and I were negotiating with the Palestinians on behalf of Israel I would make the issue of the Palestinian refugees a prime Israeli requirement, not only for ethical and moral reasons, not only for humanistic reasons, for selfish Israeli reasons, or Israeli security reasons. As long as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are rotting in those camps, Israel will have no security. So it is in our interest. And this is where Europe could help. And we are not talking of the whole of Africa or of the whole of the Third World. We are talking of something like 300.000 homes and maybe three to four hundred thousand jobs. It is a lot, but it is not unthinkable. It costs less than one middle-size war. It can be done with the joint effort of Europe and America and the rich Arab countries and Israel. This will reduce the level of despair, and together with the level of despair the level of fanaticism. As for the Israeli side, Israel needs now a warm hug to contain our fanatics. We peace people in Israel, we need to be in the position to tell our desperate extremists, it is not true that the whole world hates us always and regardless to what we do. We may finally find a family in Europe. We may finally discover that we have relatives in Europe. We may finally discover that we can be incorporated, one way or another, into the European Community, if we give up the occupied territories. With such a kind of a message it would be easier to reduce the level of despair and fear in Israel, and thus contain our fanatics. Not erase them. There is no way. Fanaticism is a deep and bad gene everywhere, not only in the Middle East. It is everywhere. But there is a counter-relationship between fanaticism and hopelessness, between fundamentalism and despair. Reducing the level of despair and anger on both sides is the only way to contain fanaticism. Containing the fanatics is the answer to all the disputed issues. And if someone wants me to be specific, I can give you a specific idea on the Mount of Temple, or the settlements, or the issue of the water, or the refugees.

Spera

Thank you Amos. I think there was a lot of food for thought.

Question, Lennkh

I have two questions. I would agree fully with you that it is not Europe's role to wag fingers or to point fingers. But then still, what exactly should Europe do. You said you want empathy. That is perhaps not enough. You should be more specific. Because I don't think one can say that Europe or some Europeans haven't tried. I am not sure if I understood you correctly that joining the European Union is in your opinion one possible avenue. The second, perhaps more difficult. After what happened the last two years, do you think what kind of basis is there for a real peace, or how long would it take to erase in the minds of people what has happened, on both sides.

Oz

I will start with the easier question, not easy but easier. What can Europe do? I think that Palestinians in particular need a Marshall Plan from Europe and the United States. A kind of Marshall Plan which will enable Palestinian society, first and foremost the refugees, to move out of poverty and create or enhance a civil society in Palestine. It is not enough to write cheques as Europeans have done in the past. You have written a number of cheques for the Palestinians. And many of those went full circle and ended up in European banks. It is not good, it is a lazy way. You have to get involved in the actual work. Assume every European Community country will take upon itself one Palestinian refugee camp. There are more European countries than Palestinian refugee camps. If I am not mistaken the number of Palestinian refugee camps, at least the significant Palestinian refugee camps, in Lebanon, in the Westbank and in Gaza are about 25. Each European nation will take upon itself one to resettle, provide with homes and jobs. Difficult, but not impossible. At the same time, yes, I think Europe should take some steps to make Israel closer to the European Community as a method of softening the hardline Israelis, proving to the Israelis that they will not be left alone in a state 12

kilometers wide right in the middle. This sense of genuine Israeli insecurity which you could even hear in the telephone conversation in my parents and my relatives in Tel Aviv, this sense that we may not be safe is still very prominent in Israel. Despite of the arrogance and the bravado Israel is a very insecure society. So Europe can do both. That is the easier question.

The harder question, what about the dreadful feelings on both sides, how can peace prevail when there is so much anger, and pain, and hatred on both sides. It is a common assumption that in order to promote peace you have to first disperse the bad feelings and create an atmosphere of friendship, and then create peace. Throughout history it is the other way around. First peace agreements are signed with clenched teeth by people who hate each other, and perhaps people who inwardly plan to break the peace treaty. Sometimes this formal piece of paper provides a situation for gradual, emotional healing, gradual, emotional de-escalation which may take many generations. It is wrong to assume that Israelis and Arabs have first to get to know one another, and like one another, and understand one another, and only then make peace. Peace comes first. Peace is a contract made precisely where there is no trust, not confidence, no love. Where there is trust, and confidence, and love you don't have to make a contract. If I sell a car to my son I don't sign a contract with him and I don't take a lawyer for this. I just sell him the car, or give him the car, or whatever. So I think a peace agreement between Israel and Palestine is possible now. How soon it will take I don't know. But it is possible now. And people on both sides more or less know what will be in this peace treaty, give or take a few, people on both sides know. The emotions, the healing of the emotions will have to come after, not before, and it may take a generation, or less, or more depending on circumstances, depending for example what happens in Arab societies, depending on what happens in the world around. If we have a common enemy with the Palestinians or with the Arab world then the wounds will heal very quickly, as you know from your own European experience. So it is not for me to prophesise, especially when I come from the city of the prophets where the competition in the prophesy business is very bad. But I believe peace first, healing the wounded emotions later.

Question

I feel that there are two things still unimaginable. First, what will happen when Israeli society will have to deal with settlers. It starts already now with the Gaza disengagement. Second, how will the Palestinians deal with Hamas and Jihad. With or without military force?

Oz

Without giving you an exact scenario, how will the Palestinian leadership deal with the Palestinian fundamentalists? I think as I said, either Palestinians see concrete hope for statehood, and more than just statehood, or resettling the refugees and moving into normal, positive life, the level of extremism in Palestinian society will be reduced. This may perhaps – I cannot guarantee, no one can guarantee – create a momentum by which Hamas or Islamic Jihad will eventually become political parties rather than militant guerilla groups. I cannot guarantee this, but there is a chance. On the Israeli side I would say it is wrong to use the word “the settlers”. There are over 250.000 Israelis living on occupied Palestinian land, various parts of it. Many of them have moved there not because they are hot headed fanatics, but because they were offered by short sighted Israeli governments heavily subsidised accommodation and a higher standard of living. Those people will move with pain, but they will move if the time comes to move. Some of them may not even have to move because Israel and Palestine will swap lands, square mile for square mile, square kilometer for square kilometer. But there will be a swap of land. So that some of the heavily populated settlements which are only one or two kilometers from the so-called green line will be incorporated in Israel, and the Palestinians will be compensated elsewhere. This is in the Geneva Accords, including a very detailed map, agreed by Israelis and Palestinians. There is a nucleus of fanatic Israelis, several hundreds of them, but not tens of thousands, and not even thousands. They will present a serious police problem for the state of Israel, no less than a very serious police problem and no more than a serious police

problem, provided that most Israelis have hope and see hope. As I said, hope is not luxury, hope is not a volatile thing, hope makes the difference for the moderates, for the pragmatics between loosing and winning the internal battle both in Israel and in Palestine. If people see hope, middle of the road people, even middle of the road hawks in Israel, they see some hope they will painfully accept the needed concessions. If on the other hand they think that concessions will be the beginning of more concessions and that Israel is doomed to become the 21st century Czechoslovakia with the Sudetenland coming first and the rest coming later, of course it will be impossible for the moderates to convince the rest of Israel to follow our way. Generate hope, this is where you people can help, this is where every public opinion maker, every peace movement, every man who is involved in the media or in the press, generate hope both for Palestinians and for Israelis. And it will be easier to do the rest. I did say easier, I did not say easy. It is not going to be easy.

Question

How do you exactly see creating hope? When you talk here to this audience, some of us in one or the other have tried to create hope. First of all within ourselves and then towards other people. But we have reached now a point where talking about Israel and talking about the conflict has become impossible outside of this group. I personally have stopped, because the arguments and the things you hear, you don't want to hear them anymore and you just stop. So the creating hope business, I myself don't really see how. I would like to get some hope from you.

Oz

Yes, I didn't say it is easy. I am ready to trade with you hope for hope. I will give you some hope on the Middle East, you will give me some other hope. You have to struggle here in Austria, in Europe with simpleminded public opinion makers whether they are on the right or, I am sorry to say, on the left. Very often I confront this European tradition, longstanding tradition, when Europeans confront a conflict. Even if they are very sophisticated and they hate vulgar America and the despise Hollywood, when it comes to an international conflict, they want Hollywood, they want to know who are the good guys, they want to know who are the bad guys. They launch a very big demonstration against the bad guys. They sign petitions to support the good guys, and they go to sleep. They have done what has to be done. I come from a very different tradition, both a Jewish tradition and perhaps a Tshechovian tradition. When I see people bleeding in the street after a car accident, I am less interested in the question who was the bad driver who caused the accident, and more interested in the question what ought to be done now. Here I think European intellectuals, especially the left, had been in a way pampered by the major conflicts of the 20th century. Fascism, anti-fascism, that was clear cut. You didn't have to be ambivalent about this. Colonialism and decolonisation, black and white, apartheid, no question, Vietnam, clear cut. People here tend often to think that every international conflict is essentially a Hollywood movie with the villains and the victims, and one day the victims will prevail and the villains will be defeated, and we will celebrate, and we will be proud that we signed a petition against the villains, and we made a demonstration and graffities in favor of the victims. I think what you could do here: project complexity. I have said earlier you no longer have to choose pro-Israel or pro-Palestine. Try to talk to people, write about it, speak about it. This is not black and white. This is a terrible tragedy. You know, the Palestinians are in Palestine because Palestine is the homeland of the Palestinians in the same sense that Sweden is the homeland of the Swedish. This beyond argument. There is no other country which the Palestinians could call home. They were kicked out, much like the Jews in Europe. They were kicked out and reminded they are nothing but Palestinians. Now the Jews for their part, the Israeli Jews had not other country in the world which they can call home. Individual Jews, yes, in many countries. Better homes, worse homes. But individual Jews could find homes. The Jews as a nation never had another home. It is a very small country, smaller than Austria. And it is the one and only homeland of two nations. This is not a Western movie. This is not about colonialism and decolonisation. This is not about good guys and bad guys. This is a colossal tragedy of the clash between two peoples with

their backs to the wall. There is an answer, and the answer is not complicated. The house must be divided into two smaller apartments. The Israelis and the Palestinians cannot become one happy family, not at this point in history at least. Because they are not one, and because they are not happy, and because they are no family, they are two families. So the house must be divided into two apartments. This message seems to be so hard to convey in Europe. For us Israelis you people could help. Because you are part of the peace movement, because you have a record, because you are more trusted than we Israelis are. Try to inject complexity, not to inject Israeli propaganda, not to promote the case that Israel is not bad – it is not bad -, not to promote the case that Palestine is wonderful - it is not wonderful. No one of the parties deserves to go to paradise. In fact they are both in hell. But try to inject complexity, and try to motivate European societies to stop giving grace and start extending help, first and foremost emotional help to both parties. Empathy, understanding, warmth is the most precious commodity right now, both for the Palestinians and both for the Israelis. That is where you could help. It is not going to be easy.

Question

You talk about hope, hope Europeans should give. But don't you think it is more evident that actually the people, the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves should give hope each other. May I mention the horrible humiliations at the check points on one side. May I mention other humiliations for Israelis done by Palestinians. I think that is where you should start. That is where the hope should come from first to somehow change that really horrible situation on a small scale, not on a big scale with Europe, America, Canada. At the check points, for example, which I as a Jew am very ashamed of. I have to say that.

Oz

Yes, the hope is coming now, recently, in the last few months, from Israel and from Palestine through the change of language. The check posts are still there, and the suicide bombers are still there. It is immensely humiliating for a pregnant Arab woman, or for an old Arab man to undergo those terrible humiliations in the Israeli check points. Believe me, it is immensely humiliating for me, I am 65 years old, each time my grandchildren go on the yellow bus to school, I go down on all fours to look under the yellow bus. It is quite humiliating for a man of my age and my stature to have to go on all fours to check under the yellow bus with children of 8, 9 and 10 year old. I don't compare the humiliations. It is a waste of time to measure which humiliation is greater. Probably it is more humiliating to be under occupation than to be under terrorist threat. What is done in Israel and in Palestine now? It is a change of language. Sharon and Mahmud Abbas, Abu Mazen, are talking a different language than Sharon and Arafat spoke just a year ago. The language is dramatically different. I don't know if it comes across in translation. But it is a dramatically different language. When the nightclub in Tel Aviv exploded two weeks ago, Abbas said that this is a crime against humanity and he condemned it in ethical terms. It is the first time in my lifetime that I hear a Palestinian leader condemn an act of terrorism not because it is harming the Palestinian cause, as Mr. Arafat used to say sometimes, but because it is immoral. This is a first. It is also the first time in my life that I hear Mr. Sharon talking about the fact that the occupation is corrupting us and that it is not possible for Israel to control forever the lives of another people. This language from Sharon is the kind of language which Mr. Sharon ten years described as the language of traitors. Now it is a change of language so far and very little else. But language is important. Remember many things in history, good and bad, began with a change of language. Détente began with a change of language. The end of the cold war began with a change of language. Nazism, and fascism, and racism always begin with language. So don't belittle the hope that we generate. But we need help from you people. We cannot do it by ourselves. We are too deeply immersed in suspicion and insecurity. Israel alone cannot resolve the problem of the Palestinian refugees. Palestine alone cannot give Israel the security it is seeking. Even if the Palestinians decided to dance and sing in Hebrew, it will not give the Israelis the kind of sense of security which the Israelis will get by feeling that they may gradually be

incorporated into the European family of nations, at least up to a point. So there are certain things that the outside world can help. And at least, if it cannot help, it should stop disturbing by wagging the fingers. Because what European public opinion makers and some European politicians are doing is definitely counterproductive. In Israel arguing with Israeli hopes, I confront every day the argument, look at your friends, they hate the Jews, they hate Israel, even if we give back Tel Aviv they would still say that we have not given back enough, even if we convert to Islam they would still be against us, they will never be satisfied, why are you trying to satisfy them, they are doomed to be against us. I hear this every day in Israel. My Palestinian friends in the Palestinian peace movement, they hear every day, the West hates Islam and will go on hating Islam whether we make peace with Israel or not, they will always hate a Muslim for being a Muslim. This is where some of the language coming from Europe can be counterproductive in the last few years for both sides. And this is where you can have some impact.

Question, Swoboda

Not a question, but perhaps one remark. When I was in Israel and Palestine some weeks ago I got many positive signals. I was told by Israelis and by Palestinians that villagers often send away Hamas people and other terrorist groups when they come with rockets and want to shoot towards Israel. This is a positive signal. That is probably one of the reasons why Hamas becomes more political because there is a shrinking support by its own population. My question is, does it mean that perhaps in the future hopefully we will have less terrorism but perhaps more fundamentalism in the political life of the Palestinian society?

Oz

Palestinian society has a strong nucleus of civil society, not enough but a strong nucleus. The future of this Palestinian civil society is the future of peace. Everything that strengthens the civil society in Palestine strengthens peace. Everything on the other hand that weakens the Palestinian middle class is bad for peace. Now, if there is a certain atmosphere, not only the language, but certain atmosphere of action above the problem of the refugees, even modest housing schemes, 200 families here, 500 families there, this will immediately transfer people from the desperate, hopeless mud into the middle class, and by definition weakens fundamentalism whether it is armed fundamentalism or unarmed fundamentalism. This I think is the key to everything. This was the great wisdom of this United States of America, not now, when it still had wisdom many years ago, with the Marshall Plan. Now that I think of this miraculous Marshall Plan of 1945 when this little man from Missouri decided to simply take about 25% of the gross national income of the United States and give it to former enemies, including Austria, including Germany, Italy, Japan. People said, you are out of your mind, you must be insane, we have 8 million American soldiers coming back from the battle field, they need homes and jobs, and you are giving the money to our enemies, and besides Europe is going to fall to Stalin anyway and all your money is going to fall to Stalin, what are you doing? In retrospect the Marshall Plan was not only the most generous and the most humane political aid in the whole of history, it was also the best investment anyone ever invested anytime in history, by enhancing the civil society and the middle class. In fact it was the Marshall Plan which decided the destiny of the cold war. It took 45 years, but it was Truman who has beaten Stalin ultimately by the Marshall Plan. Why not think along the same lines? Now Europe can be on the giving side, not on the receiving side of the Marshall Plan. Ethically, morally it will be only fair if Europe reciprocates 60 years later to the Marshall Plan not by returning the money to America, but by initiating the European-American Marshall Plan on the Middle East, on the Palestinians. This is the answer to Hamas, this is the answer to Djihad, this is the answer to the settlers. You know what will happen in Israel if the European Community decided that it is going to make, apart from anything else, a small minor contribution for re-housing of those Israeli settlers who would bone tiredly leave their homes in the settlements, modest fund. You know what will be the emotional impact, not with all the settlers, not with the hotheaded crazies, but with normal hawks, people who are hawkish and sad

about giving back their territory, you know what it will be for those people if suddenly they hear that Europe is going to help them to move into Israel proper. Now those things are not unthinkable, they are not unrealistic. And they are the answer to despair and hopelessness. And despair and hopelessness is the fertile ground of fanaticism and fundamentalism.

Question

About the deep feeling of insecurity which still exists in Israel society and what Europe could do to give them the sentiment of safety. In the last months there were discussions about the role Europe and other countries, the United States, could play on the level of military aid, the role of NATO for example in this conflict. There are even ideas of saying, if Israel is retreating from the occupied territories one should offer Israel becoming member of NATO. Would you say that is something, the role of NATO, the role of military involvement of Europe could play a role, a positive role?

Oz

Yes, everything that will give the Israelis the feeling that they have a family, a political family, will strengthen the position of the moderates in Israel and weaken the position of the hawks and the extremists. If Israel is incorporated into NATO it will make it easier for Israel, for Israeli society to accept the withdrawal into very vulnerable boundaries. If Israel is partly incorporated into the European Community it will make it easier for us Israeli pragmatics to market our pragmatism to many other Israelis who are not hotheaded but more hawkish. So the answer is yes.

Question

How do you think that the relationship between the USA and Europe reflects the problem of the Israelis and the Palestinians. There is a very anti-American movement and atmosphere in European society which is threatening for many Jews. Well, I make this experience.

Oz

Well, for those people in Europe who regard America as the devil then Israel is Rosemary's baby. But this belongs to a certain emotional history of demonology in Europe. It is not a new thing. I think the kind of emotional anti-Americanism in Europe has longstanding genes both in the far right and in the far left. And even the connecting of this anti-Americanism with anti-Jewish or antisemitic feelings is not new, whereas the far right in Europe in dark times maintained that the Jews controlled the world because they control America. Parallel language came from the far left where Wall Street and consequently America was somehow the plaything of some Jewish billionaires who are behind capitalism, behind imperialism and behind Wall Street. All of this is very ancient. All of this belongs to a certain emotional uneasiness in Europe which I could discuss but would rather not. I have some understandings. But at the same time I have to tell you that I am personally extremely critical of the policy of the United States in the Middle East or elsewhere. I think it is a stupid and shortsighted policy. I think it is a disastrous policy. The line, when we have to draw the line, is between saying America is acting stupidly, or badly, or dangerously, or immorally, Israel is behaving stupidly, immorally, shortsightedly, dangerously, whatever, and between saying those people are so and so, the problems have been so and so. Telling other people that they are doing a wrong thing is criticism. Saying something about their heretic character, about their qualities is not criticism, it is racism and demonology. That is the fine line, which I think everyone of us has to struggle sometimes. It is not just them. I think everyone of us sometimes makes this mistake of confusing behavior, behavioral criticism with criticism of character, or genes, or culture or whatever. We do this inside our families, we do this in our private lives. And I have been struggling with myself, I mean I am not above this. When I rebuke Europe now, wagging my finger at Europe, I have to check myself. It happens to me sometimes that I am so angry with someone, or with something, or with some kind of behavior that I criticise not the behavior but the personality. This is an old danger, especially in the field of conflicts. This opens the door to racism, to stereotypes, to reshape stereotypes, to cultural hatred. The world is

not emerged in so-called war civilisations. Excuse me, this is rubbish. There is no war civilisations at all. There is a battle between the fanatics and the rest of us. That's all. And fanatics are not specific to Islamic society because no one is immune. People who blow up abortion clinics in America, they differ from Bin Laden only in the scale of their actions but not in the character of the action. It is the same action. People who destroy mosques and synagogues or seminaries here in Europe do not differ from Muslim or Jewish or American fundamentalists or fanatics. It is fanatics against the rest of us. This is the real frontline of the battle of civilisation. But we have to deal with the fanatic inside ourselves. And this fanatic often tends to say, those bloody Americans, those bloody Jews, they are destroying the world because there is a conspiracy. There is no conspiracy. There is stupidity, I tell you this. Conspiracy is better literature, I know. For a novel conspiracy is better, for a film conspiracy is better. But from my experience, personal experience the proportion in this world between conspiracy and sheer stupidity is about 95% idiocy and only 5% conspiracy. These is historical. It is not made of conspiracies. It is made of shortsightedness, and stupidity, and blindness, and insecurity. And that's where everyone of us needs to draw the line between criticising behavior and criticising personality, or culture, or tradition, or conspiracy. I am sorry, I went beyond answering your question.

Question

Marwan Abado. I am a Palestinian refugee. I was born in a Palestinian camp in Lebanon. I think it is a good suggestion that each European country could take a refugee camp. But I think the problem is not that easy to speak about refugees and figures and refugee camps. I think at least the Israeli society should take more responsibility and the recognition of this injustice to my people. At this point figures will not be a big problem, even for the European. It was not only war that produced this refugees, there was a margin of injustice. This could give a big spark to solve the problem, when the Israeli society says, sorry guys, we have done that. This is a first step, could work with the European support. But the European support as a solo project will not work.

Oz

Would you forgive me if I be a little personal and ask you where are you from, which part of the country.

Question

My village is on the border. It is Kufur Birem. It is a Maronite village. Half of the villagers are living as refugees in Israel, and half of them are refugees in Lebanon.

Oz

I know your village very well. I was involved with some of my colleagues from the peace movement trying to convince the Israeli government to fulfil the verdict from the Israeli supreme court that people of Kufur Birem are allowed to go back to this village. I have been involved with your village. But accepting moral responsibility. You may have not know about it, but it was about three weeks ago that my colleagues David Grossman and some others signed a petition on the front page of Ha'Aretz saying that we call upon Israel to generate an emotional breakthrough by taking part of the moral responsibility for the Israeli-Palestinian tragedy and facing the fact that Israel has committed crimes in the past. We in the same notification called upon the Palestinians and the other Arabs to also take part of their responsibility and admit that they have committed some crimes. But we don't make it a condition. We don't say, only if the Palestinians will admit we will admit. This is childish. We say, we admit, we call upon the Israeli government to admit, but we also call on the Palestinian and the Arab leadership to admit their part of the responsibility. Yes, you are absolutely right. There is an emotional dimension of the conflict, and it is important that this emotional dimension is addressed even if I don't believe that every refugee can go back to exactly the same village. There is no way. But the emotions have to be accepted. Give them the recognition that they had been wronged

at least. And they have been wronged against the Palestinian refugees by Israel and also by the Arab countries, even by the Palestinian leaders. But first it has to be recognised that those people have been deprived of decent human lives for almost 60 years now. This is a human disaster. This is a human source of pain, and anger, and violence and fanaticism. Let's recognise this. I would not make any agreement with Palestine if this agreement does not contain a comprehensive solution to the problem of the refugees of 1948. As an Israeli and for selfish security reasons I will not sign it. But I accept your moral and emotional correction. It is a very important one, and I thank you for this comment.

Question

How dangerous can be Islamic extremists?

Oz

The danger of Islamic fanaticism and fundamentalism, there is such a danger. And every responsible person, whether this person is Israeli or Palestinian or Egyptian or Jordanian, will admit that this danger exist. There is a certain combination between despair and hopelessness and fundamentalism and fanaticism. The only way to contain fanaticism, not to erase it but to contain it, is to reduce the level of despair. This is not something that has to do with Islam. It has to do with despair. From the history of Central Europe, from the history of Germany we know what despair and hopelessness have done to Central Europe. We know that Hitler's way to power was paved by despair and hopelessness of desperate people who turned Hitler's way and become Nazis not because they were born racists, but because they were desperate and they saw no hope. My strong conviction is that the way to contain fundamentalists not only in Palestine, all over the Middle East is to initiate a Marshall Plan for Palestine and for the Middle East. I strongly believe this. Now would this completely solve the problem? No. Will this convince Iran to become a different society? Probably not in the near future. And yet, if we see in a country like Jordan – and I give Jordan as an example because in Jordan there is a nucleus of civil society, limited tradition of freedom of speech, very relative, and some parliamentary institutions although not perfect parliamentary institutions – evolving into a constitutional monarchy with a higher degree of democracy and freedom of speech, and at the same time it is a prosperous country, and a successful country, and an Arab country. It will become the envy of the neighborhood. It will be envied by people all around. And Jordan is not that big. It is not impossible to turn Jordan into a relative Middle Eastern paradise, a showcase. This is the will to go about Islamic fundamentalism. It is not enough to come with a gun and tell the fanatics, stop being fanatics or I shoot you in the face. It is not enough. I am not a pacifist, sometimes a gun is necessary. But a gun is not enough. We need a Marshall Plan for Palestine and for the Middle East. This can help contain Islamic fundamentalism.

Question, Gusenbauer

I think in a conflict like the one between the Israelis and the Palestinians it is not the first case where an agreement or peace can only be achieved with some sort of outside help. Also the war in Europa would not have been finished without outside help. We only should overcome some of the classic debates. And one of the classic debates is about historical justice. If we are entering that debate we never come to an agreement. If there would have been a long talk in Europe after 1945 about historical justice, peace would have never been achieved. Therefore one has to be very, very pragmatic in the substantial points that have to be settled. The second point is, the Marshall Plan has been indeed the most successful story at least in the history of Europe. It was not only the Marshall Plan after 1945, it was also what, let's say, the European Community and the European Union later on did in supporting the democratic development in Greece, in Portugal, in Spain. It was connected with economic development, with economic support and with giving people a certain hope. The second issue that you mentioned, does Israel belong to the European family, and how can that be shown? At least my assessment is that Israel is a more European country than many, many others

that are in the pipeline to become members of the European Union. If there is a resolution of the conflict, to where does Israel want to belong. I think there is a strong argument to say, Israel should belong to Europe and the European Community. Probably drastical change will happen in Israel after an agreement is reached, the definition of society and the definition of the state. Up to now Israel has been mainly defined by its conflict with the Palestinians. Then entire society has to find a new definition, the leading idea of the society. And in that context I think a stronger alignment with the European Union could be of certain help, a possible path for a further development.

Oz

Thank you very much. With the first part of your comment I agree completely, in particular your point about historical justice. If I had any position in the future peace conference, any capacity at all, I would go to the peace conference and tell the sound technicians to disconnect the microphones each time any of the leaders refers to the past. They are getting paid to deal with the present and the future. Leave the past to the intellectuals, to the poets, to the historians to disagree. And we will disagree for a long time. Politicians should not be allowed to mention the word, “do you remember that 50 years ago”. The moment they say this, disconnect the microphones. Now as for the second part of your comment, we may differ, but we may discuss one day whether Israeli society is really defined primarily by its conflict with the Arabs. This is the media projection of Israel. Israel is conceived in the outside world by the conflict because this is news, this is the headlines. Personally I think in the course of the last 100 years the Hebrew speaking society in Israel had achieved tremendous literary, cultural, scientific achievements, not only on a local scale but of a universal significance. First and foremost the very revival of the Hebrew language. And this I think is the real definition of the Israeli society, and this is controversial within Israel. We have not resolved the issue of church and state, and we have not resolved the issue of the rules of the game, and we have not resolved the issue of how we Israelis relate to Jewish history. Is Jewishness, nationhood, religion, a mixture of both? We have a lot on our plate to deal with. But the most important defining characteristic of Israeli society is its creativity in many fields. And this I think will keep the Israelis together and perhaps will keep them close to Europe in many ways, even after the conflict is resolved. I asked the publisher of my books in China, in Beijing, what is it that makes Chinese readers interested in Israeli literature, not just my works but the works of my colleagues? Is it conflict? Is it the bible? Probably not. What is it that makes China interested in such an extend in Israeli literature. Many novels are translated. This man said something very interesting to me. He said, you know there are right now 11 countries which have successfully launched satellites into orbit in space, Israel was no 6, China no 7, I read Israeli literature because I want to understand why not China no 6?

Question, Gusenbauer

Maybe I was not precise. What I meant is limited to the political society. When talking to people who are in Israeli politics or looking into the electoral programs of the parties, the main issue always is which position they take on the conflict. If you try to discuss with them economic policy, social policy, education, etc. some of them might have an idea, but the carrying issue at least in all the elections – and I think that is understandable because of the situation – is mainly the question of the conflict.

Oz

The conflict obviously casts a heavy shadow over everything. And of course it is the focus of attention everywhere. But it is my hope, not only my hope, it is also my complaint, that somehow European intellectuals, educated people, people with broad horizons are not aware of the intensity of the civil society in Israel. Israel is not only Sharon, and Peres, and settlers, and Peace Now. This is what makes the news headlines. But it will be as wrong to define Israel by its politics as it will be to define France by its colonial exploits in North Africa in the bad years. It is a common mistake

because this is precisely the schematisation of life, the schematisation of culture, the reduction of everything into the CNN world. And the CNN world is not the real world, I am sorry to tell you. I am supposed to be the author of fiction, but there is less fiction in my work than in the world of CNN.

Question

About the peace movement. I want to know if you have the feeling that the peace movements in Israel and in Palestine has a new start.

Oz

The peace movements in Israel and in Palestine are conducting a complicating affair for 25 years now or more. It began with very few pioneers, and it became a very widespread phenomenon now. We talk, sometimes we shout and scream. But let me tell you, it has always been much easier for me and for my colleagues to talk to pragmatic Palestinians than to talk to the friends of Palestine in Europe. Fortunately we don't have to make peace for the friends of Palestine in Europe, we all try to make peace with the Palestinians. Yes, there is an atmosphere of cautious optimism. We know better than anyone else that we are walking on a very thin ice, right now. We know that the new evolution, and the new language, and the new hopes, and the new attempt is constantly threatened by the fanatics on both sides. My knowledge, not just my feeling, my knowledge is that even if something terrible will happen and might happen, it will delay not destroy the process because deep down in the minds of Palestinians and Israelis not just in the peace movement, everyone, there is realisation that in the end of the day there will be two states. Some people will minutely add, and this will be a disaster. But if today you pass a law, you pass a public opinion survey, or a referendum between the Mediterranean and the river Jordan, ask every individual, Israeli, Jew, Palestinian, Arab, Palestinian Israeli Arab, Christian, whatever, anyone, ask all of them, not what would you like to see, not what do you regard as a just solution, not what are your hopes, but simply what do you actually think will happen in the end of the day? About 80% will say, a two state solution. And some will immediately add a reservation, but we are against it. People know this is the real piece of good news from Israel and Palestine. People know. They did not know this 30 years ago. 30 years ago many Israelis were stupid enough to think that there is no Palestinian problem, that the entire Palestinian problem is just a vicious invention of a pan-Arabic propaganda machine, created to embarrass Israel. Israelis had difficulty to pronounce the word Palestinians. They preferred to say the Arab inhabitants of the land or some other euphemism. Palestinian and other Arabs tried to avoid the dirty word Israel. They referred to the Zionist entity, or the artificial entity. They assumed that Israel is some kind of an infection, if they scratch it hard enough it will go away. Not any longer. The Israelis and the Palestinians know now that the other is not going to go away whether they are happy about it or not. The other is there to stay. Somehow they have to compromise with the existence of the other whether this existence is morally justified, a source of joy, a source of love it is not. But then conflicts are not about love. And love is irrelevant anyway. When all of Europe was painted with those infantile graffiti, make love not war, I point the slogan vis-à-vis the Palestinians, make peace not love. After all the opposite of war is not love. The opposite of war is peace. And peace is something the Israelis and the Palestinians, not only in the peace movements, know is going to happen. Some issues, maybe with this I will conclude, will have to remain open ended, and it is not the end of the world if they are open ended. The issue of the refugees is urgent. This cannot be left for the future. The issue of the Israeli sense of insecurity, terrorism, this is urgent, this has to be resolved. Whose holy places, this can be left open for a while. People will be allowed to pray, different hours perhaps, some pragmatic arrangement will be made, and no flag will be waved over the disputed holy places. It is not the end of the world. My grandmother told me, when I was a very little kid, she was a very wise woman, and she explained to me in simple words what was the difference between Jew and Christian, not Jew and Arab, Jew and Christian. She said, you see, my dear boy, the Christians believe that the Messiah has been here once and he will come again one day; the Jews on the other hand believe that the Messiah is still to come in the future, and you cannot imagine, my boy, how

much bloodshed, and hatred, and incitement over this issue. Why, said my grandmother, why can't everybody simply wait and see. If the Messiah comes and says, hello it is nice to see you again, the Jews will have to convert. If the Messiah comes saying, how do you do, I am glad to meet you, the entire Christian world will have to apologize for the Jews. Until then live and let live. This is the exact answer to the issue of the disputed holy places. Leave them unresolved. The Messiah will come and tell us which is right religion. I think he will probably come and tell us that God is not religious, and God is not even interested in religion. This is my private opinion. Thank you very much.

Scholten

Thank you very much. We just wait another ten years for you to come again. Next time you come I do hope that we talk only about literature, your literature. Tonight we have prepared dinner, und ich hoffe, dass wir noch ein bisschen zusammenbleiben können.