

There must be peace between symbols

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Section: Themes / Israel-Palestine

Editing by "Thinking-East.Net"

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Mid-East leaders announce truce, reports the BBC. But, no matter what the political results of the Peace Process, there shall be no peace between Israel and Palestine until their deeply rooted symbols are reconciled, says Christopher Schwartz.

With the elections finished and Abu Mazen the victor, there is a lot of talk that the Peace Process may soon be renewed, may even be, after so many tears and spilt blood, successful.

Only fools would believe that.

When all is said and done, what has constantly frustrated the Peace Process has been the would-be peacemakers' neglect of the dreams and hopes which fuel the Conflict. Even if a political peace is finally achieved, there shall still remain oppression and terrorism, cynical colonization and nihilistic insurgency, only transmuted into subtler, more intangible formulations.

The great irony of the modern Holy Land is that unbeknownst to them, both peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, share in their core the same ideals, differing only by the thinnest shades of symbolic imagery.

On the one hand is the Exile, a wilting flower of a person who has been cut off at the root from the soil of identity: the landscape, the landmarks, the vanished generations which preceded him, the whispers of ancestors' prayers still blowing across the hills and echoing in the deepest recesses

of the Jewish and Arab psyche.

On the other hand is the Warrior, who has vowed to never again suffer the multifarious spiritual and physical forms of banishment-assimilation, apartheid, refugee camps, occupation, extermination.

For the Israeli, the *Shoah* (Holocaust) and the „musülmann“ (those Jews who, in the Nazi death camps, shuffling mindlessly and meaninglessly to the gas chambers, had already died and were simply waiting for their bodies to surrender) comprise the ultimate symbol of the Exile. The Warsaw ghetto fighters and the Matzada zealots, however, comprise the ultimate symbol of the Warrior who, translated into the Israeli mind, becomes the Partisan, the ragtag and almost lunatic insurgent, the lone hero standing against the infinite forces of darkness, battling till his inevitable defeat and demise.

For the Palestinian, the *Nakba* (the Catastrophe, or 1948) and the refugees languishing in tents and mud huts, form the fullest symbol of the Exile. The PLO and the Hamas shaheed (martyr), however, are the Warrior, who, translated into the Palestinian mind, now becomes the Guerilla, the revolutionary striving against all odds for the finest inti-

fada, to „shake off“ the sorrow and shame and oppressions of the past, suicidally struggling to regain an honor long lost and never to be regained.

And of course the intersection of these symbols is another symbol, the coveted Jerusalem, that city of cities, which has defied all conquerors, which has persevered against fickle fortune and infernal fate-just as the Jews and Palestinians have persevered.

There shall be no peace between nations until there is a peace between symbols.

And what is the essence of that peace? A reinterpretation that calls for *solidarity*.

The Partisan and the Guerilla, rooted as they are in the trauma of the Exile, are good symbols, pure in their defiance, satanic only when directed against flesh and blood human beings when they should be channeled back into the psychic realm of systems, beliefs experiences and ideas, that inner dimension in which symbols are born, nursed, vie and die, thundering and storming and raining upon physical history the destructive brimstone and life-giving rains of human potential.

There are indeed wars to be fought, but the Israelis and Palestinians must awaken and realize that theirs is really a common spiritual war against the tyrannies within the human soul... and not against each other.