The Arabs in Israel and the West Bank have been only secondary beneficiaries of the extraordinary economic development of Israel. Nevertheless, they have moved far ahead of the masses in other Arab countries except where oil revenues have come in. Some analysts believe that this process can be accelerated as a primary objective, and that the refugees can be rehabilitated without massive resettlement and without prejudicing final territorial agreements, by furthering industrial development.

This would require international capital investment on a scale which is impossible without more intensive planning, more visibly exposed. To do otherwise would be to continue the policy followed for 20 years by the Arab governments of letting the refugee camps fester as an intentional irritant, leaving the people as mere pawns in a larger political game. By making better use of its intellectual resources for comprehensive planning, Israel could do much to reinforce its own claim on the world’s conscience and expectations for a new harmony.

On a global scale, the ideology of nationalism was not destroyed at Hiroshima. Nevertheless, Israel’s success or failure against equally nationalistic adversaries counts for little in a process so dominated by the games of the superpowers. Many non-Zionist Jews, like myself, might wish that Israel could demonstrate some transcendental, post-nationalistic form of political organization. To demand that other people live in our futuristic dreams, however, is to condemn them to extinction in present reality.

Israel does have unique assets for an eventual turning toward that transcendence in its democratic traditions and in the called-of its intellectual resources.

(Witness its universities and the Weizmann Institute of Science, which are unmatched in many larger countries.) A number of intellectuals of a wide range of political complexion have organized an Association for Peace in Tel Aviv, with a mailing address in Rome to facilitate a dialogue with their Arab counterparts.

They would refocus efforts on regional planning for the welfare of the whole area—a dream that Israel’s first president, Chaim Weizmann, shared with many Arab leaders 50 years ago. Present hope of economic development rests, of course, on stopping the hemorrhage of war. The association posits no particular tactical solution on boundaries but stresses the positive merits of arrangements for economic and social cooperation.

Whether the Arab countries are still free enough from external control to pursue their own advantage is an empty question until they develop the insight and desire to do so. For Israel’s part, the government must still take many steps before such schemes can be believed as more than unoficial fantasies. Fear that the terrorists might redouble their attacks on Arab groups unwilling to cooperate with Israel has dampened publicity about such efforts, but this may also be too easy an excuse to postpone important humanitarian steps.


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Joshua Lederberg