

Letter to World Citizens

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Can a Middle East Peace Really Exist?

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How does a world citizen interpret the September 13 signing of the Mideast pacts?

Let's first consider the statements of President Bill Clinton, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, PLO negotiator Mahmoud Abbas, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat. "Peace" was mentioned 49 times: 16 times by Clinton, seven by Peres, seven by Abbas, nine by Rabin, and nine by Arafat.

But law, the progenitor of peace, was not mentioned even once.

How can political leaders not know that "peace" is an effect, a consequence of a legal contract or sanction, i.e., law? We citizens must obey the law or suffer its sanctions. Take law away and citizenship deteriorates into jungleship where all carry guns and barricade themselves behind personal fortresses. That's called anarchy. Witness the nation-state "system" itself, in which lawlessness or anarchy dominates the area *between* nations.

What and where is the law *between* Palestinians and Israelis? There is none, nor is there any plan for one. Agreements like treaties are not enforceable.

Foreign Minister Peres did say, "Let us become a civic community." But he went no further. To be a "civic community" requires common civic law —and common civic government to legislate, execute and enforce it. In short, there is no "civic community" without civic laws. That's elementary.

The implications are that a common citizenship means the exercise of a common sovereignty with the consent of the governed. To take a page from U.S. history, the founders created a new citizenship out of a recognition of a common sovereignty. In this instance, the governed would be both Israelis and Palestinians *but not as such*. Maybe, instead, as citizens of an Abraham Federation? (See p. 5) A Middle East Mediterranean State? Who knows?

The 18th century fantasy that a nation-state can meet human needs is blasted away with every war between states, each an expression of social breakdown or dysfunction. Israel is no exception. On the contrary, Israel's short history, from the beginning, has been one of war and strife. (The tragic irony of Israel's very existence is that it was born from nationalism's exclusionary character, which gave rise directly to the Holocaust.) The dichotomy is self-evident, particularly in terms of the Jewish Decalogue whose first admonishment is not to kill. A nation-state, by definition, is an exclusive group of people with an enemy. Killing fellow humans is implicit in its being and structure.

The "sovereign" state, since the 18th century, has replaced the sovereign deity. The worship by Jews of the State of Israel can be likened to their worship of the Golden Calf of old, which was condemned by Moses as idolatry.

Is it not increasingly self-evident that both "Israel" and "Palestine" have run their historic course and can no longer exist as "independent" socio/political units?

Prime Minister Rabin set the tone for the new era when he said that "We, like you, are people — people who want to build a home, to plant a tree, to love — live side-by-side with you ... in dignity, in empathy, as human beings." In short, "we humans," he maintained, "want what you humans want." He concluded by wishing, on behalf of all "citizens of the world," that "peace come to all your homes." Chairman Arafat, in his turn, stated that Palestinians share "your values for freedom, justice and human rights..."

Diplomats are always talking about the importance of "first steps" to peace and peace "negotiations." But peace is indivisible, just as the world is indivisible. It cannot be divided into the "Mideast," or "Bosnia," or "East Timor," or "Somalia." If war has gone global since 1914, then peace must go global, especially since 1945. That means — and this is no surprise to WCN readers — that the entire nation-state system must be transcended, indeed

has already been transcended by technology, commerce and the sheer implosion of time and distance. For the Palestinians to yearn for their own state after seeing what a catastrophe the State of Israel has become is to succumb to the fantasy that states bring security. In fact, precisely the opposite is true, regardless of how offensive that may seem to nation-state patriots.

So is the signing of a Mideast pact, then, a “step in the right direction?” The answer can only be no, however euphoric the public reaction. I saw on TV young boys in Jericho giving flowers to Israeli soldiers who actually smiled back at them. That was not a “step in the right direction” or a “peace negotiation.” That was a concrete *act* of recognition.

In referring to world government, Emery Reves wrote in 1945 in his book, *Anatomy of Peace*: “You can’t cross a chasm in two leaps.” In other words, either you do it or you don’t.

As we close the 20th century, peace-making can only happen between sovereign world citizens, despite however else we may mislabel ourselves today.