

The War Against Israel and Growing European Nationalism

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Thank you very much for inviting me today to talk about the fight against anti-Semitism and the role of the European Union in the Middle East.

Since the beginning of the Oslo process, the European Union has been one of the major donors to the Palestinian National Authority (PA). The EU became one of the main supporters of a Palestinian state; since 1992, the European Union has set itself up as the protecting power of the Palestinians.

In this war - and it is a war against Israel that the PA is waging - the EU is far from being a neutral observer. Since the beginning of the 90s, the EU is trying to play a role in the region, based on the excellent relations that the Federal Republic of Germany and other countries maintain to most Arab countries.

Officially, the institutions of the European Union always declare that they are - well balanced - calling upon both sides to hold peace again. But in reading the resolutions, in following the policy of the EU, you know that this is not the case. You have only to see the exhibitions on Israel and Palestine in the European parliament's foyer - where Israel is accused of sociocide and branded as an apartheid state - to know which side the EU is on. While the Israeli side is confronted over and over again with concrete demands and every step of Israel is being commented on and criticised in detail, the PA is only abstractly called upon doing everything possible against an abstract kind of terror. And you can have considerable doubts whether the repeated public demands on the PA are still raised in any informal setting.

The propagandist support is complemented by financial aid. Between

for example 2000 and 2001 the total sum of EU aid actually implemented in the Palestinian territories amounts to at least 330 million Euro. Both forms of support are part of European strategy to gain influence and to weaken Israel. The particularly striking example for this strategy is the “direct budgetary assistance” to the PA. Israel decided in 2000 not to continue to transfer certain taxes and customs duties that it had collected on behalf of the PA, but to freeze these funds. The Israeli government gave reasons for this breaking of an agreement, arguing that the PA uses these funds to support terrorist activities against Israel. In this situation, the Europeans did not decide - as you might have expected - to get to the bottom of this and to examine whether such accusations against the recipient of so much European money were justified. Rather, the accusations were flatly dismissed as Israeli propaganda. At the end of the year 2000, a decision was made to grant the PA an additional 90 Mio. € at short notice, but under conditions, among them a proper accounting control mechanism. Even though the PA declared its intention to respect these conditions, rather the opposite happened. This did not prevent the EU foreign ministers from providing the PA with 10 Mio. € monthly in the form of a direct budgetary assistance on a continuous basis beginning in June 2001. These direct payments amount to more than 10% of the entire PA budget.

Once more, to put it more clearly: Israel says: We do not transfer any more money because we fear that this could be used for anti-Semitic terrorist acts - and the EU has nothing better to do than filling exactly this financial gap and providing this money. The direct budgetary assistance was stopped in January 2003, but the other contributions to the PA budget are continuing.

It is an open secret within the European Parliament and the Commission that European Union aid to the PA has not been spent correctly. Everyone knows that the PA created a black budget. After

entering and searching the Headquarter of Arafat, the IDF presented a vast amount of material found there. It shows how the PA as an Institution and Arafat as a person are involved in ideological preparation, financial and political support and planning of terrorist acts against Israeli citizens. The government of Israel officially informed the European Commission that the PA misused EU money. The reaction of the Commission to the material that the Israelis presented was - to put it diplomatically - not very convincing. After all, the responsible commissioner Christopher Patten constantly repeated that there were no grounds. When he did comment on one of the many grounds that he claimed to be non-existent he evaded all concrete accusations, drew absurd comparisons, refuted accusations that nobody had made, explained technical details that had nothing to do with the issue - and all this with the monotonous persistence of a Tibetan prayer wheel. You will excuse me if I do not go into further details - it is not worth it.

When the first accusations were raised that European funds might have been used to create a black budget for the PA to finance its war against Israel, I started an initiative to establish an inquiry committee in the European Parliament. There was a lot of resistance against the establishment of such a committee. No matter that over 170 of my colleagues joined the initiative: it has pretty much failed. The European Parliament does not intend to verify whether European taxpayers' money could have been used to finance anti-Semitic murderous attacks. Unfortunately, this fits well with European policy in this area.

For me it is obvious that the Middle East has become one of the most important fields of European military superpower ambitions after the NATO-led war against Yugoslavia in 1999. You might say that this is the exaggerated mistrust of leftists, but wise Israeli politicians predicted this already during the bombing of Belgrade.

The primary goal of the EU is the internationalisation of the conflict in order to underline the need for its own mediating role. Here is the prevailing European view: The longer the conflict continues and the deeper it gets, the more evident is the incapability of the US to moderate a peace process. The EU thus concludes that both sides are in need of - ironically speaking - the good uncle from Europe to resolve this conflict with European democratic and ecological values, its welfare state and civil society. How good for both sides that there is Europe and how bad for the world that one side, and this is Israel, is affording a wild west type of policy in the style of the US.

The need for a solution only exists as long as the war continues. This is why the EU does not want the conflict to end before it gains a major role. And this is why the EU does not wish the PA to give up too early and why the EU is strengthening the PA. The EU is getting up to the cynicism of stirring up a conflict that it supposedly wants to see resolved by financing one side. This is the inherently inhuman purpose of EU humanitarian aid in the region. The Palestinians are playing the ugly role of being the cannon fodder for Europe's hidden war against the US. It can be noted on the side that this is not considered an anti-Arab policy by those who otherwise easily use this word.

A peace process of the sort that the European Union would like to create includes European soldiers stationed in Israel. Mr. Poettering, the chairman of the biggest political group in the European Parliament, the Conservatives, said on October 9th 2003 in Parliament „that we need an international peacekeeping force“ and he did not hesitate to stress that these forces should include European soldiers. He added: „We Europeans should start an initiative, especially now when our American friends are taken up by the presidential election campaign — and we all know how important the support from some groups is in order to get elected in America“.¹ It is quite clear whom

this gentleman means.

This is just one of many examples how anti-Semitic stereotypes affect the perception of the Middle-East conflict by high-ranking EU politicians.

Nevertheless, the EU is not a monolithic bloc; it is a union of competing nation states with differing interests. That means that not only the EU as such but also individual member states are taking the lead in diplomatic unfriendliness towards Israel or in direct assistance to Palestinian institutions. While so-called *Old Europe* and *New Europe* disagreed on how close the relation to the US should be and if Germany and France should have a leading role in making Europe a super-power, there is in contrast a consensus of anti-Israeli policy from the left to the right in the EU, from Sweden to Spain. Even the closest ally of the US, Great Britain, has very good relations to the Palestinians and generally supports anti-Israeli measures.

Germany has — because of its history — a special interest. German's political aspirations of world-wide influence have always to deal with the history of this country. The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Fischer, once drew a false equation between Auschwitz and Kosovo in order to legitimise the first German war operations after WW II. Regarding the situation in the Middle East Mr Fischer is avoiding this false and hypocritical comparison with Nazi-Germany very carefully. Contrary to many others, Mr. Fischer does not tire of underlining the particular responsibility that Germany has towards Israel, and that the Shoah is unique in history. This often leads to the impression that at least the German Foreign Minister is rather reasonable in this regard. I can only firmly warn you against this misunderstanding of German foreign policy, since the argumentation of a special responsibility of Germany is nothing less than a preparation of German-soldiers with or without blue-helmets in East-Jerusalem, and this would mean the breaking of "the last taboo of

German foreign and military policy after Adolf Hitler" (Focus).

It is true that there are some political forces in Europe, mainly from the political right, that oppose the pro-Palestinian politics of the EU — a little bit. In most cases they just want to camouflage their anti-foreigner rhetoric against Arab immigration as a fight against anti-Zionism. The Vlaams Blok in Belgium, the Front National in France, the Alleanza Nazionale in Italy — they are the false friends of Israel coming from the extreme right. This is also true for the Conservatives in Germany, Italy or in the United Kingdom. Their actions against unconditional support of the Palestinian leadership are in the best case completely blind to anti-Semitism. In most cases it only results from a specific national interest or international situation. If the situation or even just the position of their respective parties within this situation changes, it may also alter their position towards the conflict in the Middle East.

Please do not get me wrong. I do not think that Mr. Patten, Mr. Fischer and Mr. Arafat have made a conspiracy to wage war against Israel. But I am really convinced that there is a far-reaching coalition of interests between the EU and the PA in respect to the conflict. And this is my explanation why nearly nobody within the European Institutions really wants to know how the PA has used the money from Europe.

The essential point of this shared interest is the internationalisation of the conflict. The PA is looking for an internationalisation because it is hoping for an engaged positioning of the Europeans on its behalf. Not without reason, as you may suspect. In the meantime, it has been proven by a wealth of facts that the so-called al-Aqsa Intifada is a war planned by the PA, based on its decision to feel provoked by Ariel Sharon's visit to the temple mount. The goal of this war is to enforce

the creation of a Palestinian state from Israel under conditions of the PA. The means to reach this goal are the destabilisation of Israeli society and the weakening of Israel as a military and political factor. It is clear that anti-Semitic acts of terror play a major role in the pursuit of the war aims. They make life in Israel difficult to bear, they lead to an increase in emigration and a drop in immigration, and they have caused the worst economic downturn in decades. Attacks on Israelis are not only committed by opposition groups in the Palestinian territories but also by brigades close to Arafat's al-Fatah. Police- and secret services of the PA logistically and militarily support them. People sought by Israel as terrorists are put on the payroll of the PA. Well, to put it a bit polemically, there is an ongoing competition in terms of murder and manslaughter between the brigades that are close to the PA and the organisations paid for by Syria, Iran and - until recently - Iraq. Naturally, this competition is taking place on a financial level as well. Whoever pays chooses the music. The PA also has a few additional disadvantages to even out if it does not want to lose control: its double strategy to commit assassinations and to negotiate with Israel about an end of terror could look like treason of the Palestinian cause in the eyes of a population incited by anti-Semitism.

Apart from this, the PA has to divert attention from its responsibility for the living conditions in the Palestinian territories. Not only have PA officials sold food aid so that European cans have not even reached their intended recipients. At this moment, I prefer to remain silent about the rather petit-bourgeois forms of corruption and extortion in which high- and low-ranking officials of the PA engage. To put it cautiously: In view of the amount of aid to the PA it is rather strange that malnutrition and insufficient supply are so widespread in the Palestinian territories. Let me add something: The role of UNRWA, which is the United Nations Agency for Palestinian

Refugees, and that is sponsored mainly by the EU, is also very questionable. It is doing everything in order to keep this refugee problem unsolved- together with the Arab states - and it is thus providing the PA with a means to block every serious peace process with the demand for a so-called right to return.

For its war against Israel, the PA has received not protest but rather enthusiastic approval from Palestinian society. This is the result of a true flood of anti-Semitic literature that is published in the Palestinian territories and in all other Arab countries and that sells like hot cakes, among them books like "Protocols of the Elders of Zion", Ford's book about "the international Jews" or Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf". Much of this is a contemporary form of Holocaust-Denial-literature from Europe and the US, some of it comprises works from Syrian, Saudi-Arabian, Lebanese or Palestinian writers, among them high representatives of the respective regimes. Anti-Semitic hate talk can be found in newspapers that are close to the government. Anti-Semitic statements are made on national, pan-Arab and international conferences by official student bodies and otherwise respected professors. The distribution of this literature would not have been possible without the benevolent support or at least tacit consent of state authorities as well as of the PA. Similarly, new schoolbooks published by the PA and financed by different European countries are not free of anti-Semitic clichés. Thus, the mental mobilisation against Israel had begun long before September 2000, and there is no evidence that the PA would stop it even if it were to call off the Al-Aqsa-Intifada.

We know little about events within Palestinian society, not only due to language barriers but also because dissidents and so-called collaborators are silenced by means of terror and intimidation. It appears, however, as if anti-Semitism has put down roots in the

Middle East and that an independent Arab form of anti-Semitism has evolved. Meir Litvak, an Israeli academic, came to the following conclusion: „Today Anti-Semitism has become an integral part of the intellectual and cultural discourse of the Arab world. Much of the Arab society believes it and it is much harder to uproot than was the case 30 or 40 years ago“²

Thus, we should not lull ourselves into a false sense of security by assuming that these waves of anti-Semitism in the Arab world are nothing but a short-lived flower of war propaganda that will fade away in the wake of eased political tensions. Anti-Semitism is not the result of seeking a scapegoat in time of crisis that vanishes when the crisis is over. It is a widespread world-view and also exemplifies a resentment that can be very useful for different political strategies.

All these facts make it very difficult for me to believe that a so-called Two-states-solution would be the end of war. From all we know about the politics of the Palestinian leadership and growing Anti-Semitism among the Palestinian public, I see hardly any evidence for this assumption. A rational analysis rather leads to the contrary. The goal of Hamas, al-Fatah and all main political forces in Palestine has become more and more is to destroy Israel. To destroy the state, or destroy Israel as a Jewish state. In this concept of politics, peace would only be a cease-fire to better prepare the next war. The Palestinian leadership tries to assemble all means necessary to force Israel to make concessions, but not for Israel to make compromises for a lasting peace but rather to make it easier to vaporise Israel as a Jewish state. It is not the „gefüllte Fisch“ or that I am a fan of national homogeneity why this scares me so much. It is because this would be — in a world of growing anti-Semitism — the end of the only state that is obliged to offer refuge to people who define themselves or who are being defined by others as Jewish. This is the goal of the

Palestinian cause. It might not be the conscious intention of European policy, but it might well be the outcome of European support of today's Palestinian leadership.

So, if people talk about a so-called viable Palestinian state, like Commissioner Patten does so often, one has to ask what "viable" really means. Today, anti-Semitism has become an integral part of the nation-building ideology of Palestine. This will not vanish and go away once the economic and social situation of the Palestinian people has improved or once Palestine has become an independent state with defensible borders, more weapons and its own water resources. But this is the underlying concept of the so-called Road Map. This road map is a German invention that is now in a modified version a part of the official policy of the US. The premise of this plan is that all that is missing for real peace is an independent Palestinian state. In this concept, Israel is held responsible for the existence of an aggressive Palestinian nationalism, for the terrorist acts committed against its own citizens, and for the growth of anti-Zionism, anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism all over the world. It was a European success to make this Road Map the official policy of the US government. Before this happened, Israel and the US demanded the end of terrorist acts as a sign of good will from the PA before negotiations could start. Had the PA done this, it would have been a sign that the PA had changed its strategy and wanted to be a real partner in a lasting peace process. Now a Palestinian state is to be built without any conditions to be fulfilled. Israel would be nuts to allow building-up a Palestinian state that could be a threat to the Jewish nation. The Road Map is an attempt to force Israel to do so, and further conflicts will follow automatically. Besides this, the Israelis can do whatever they want — for their enemies it will always be an expression of so-called Zionist imperialism.

But what does all this have to do with anti-Semitism in Europe?

European policy in the Middle East is an important link of European anti-Zionism and Arab anti-Semitism which is as disastrous as it is effective; a coalition that is all the more effective because it is accompanied by an emancipation of the EU from the US. The relationship between foreign policy and mass consciousness is particularly important in the case of growing, openly expressed anti-Semitism.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the open expression of anti-Semitism is still disapproved by the media and the political elite in Europe. If you wanted to express an opinion that Jews are a power that controls the world by money, you would usually do this more cautiously: in the form of criticising Israeli policy, in the form of hints towards a powerful Jewish lobby in the US, through conspiracy- theories about the events of September 11th, or as a complaint about Anglo-Saxon predatory capitalism. None of it is anti-Semitic per se, a few of these resentments are simply a wrong criticism of capitalism but all these ideas can be linked with anti-Semitism and this is why they often succeed in calling up the corresponding pictures of supposed Jewish plans for world domination.

Moreover, this is also important in another sense. In the words of Theodor W. Adorno, anti-Semitism is a form of *conformist rebellion*, which means an opposition against the current state of society but in the name of ruling values and norms of this very same society . Anti-Semitism is open for an apparent or real approval from above exactly because it supports the idea to be a defender of society against an evil minority. Let us not fool ourselves: even before September 11th, anti-Semitism had not disappeared in Europe. In fact it has been continuously on the rise since 1989. Political developments since then have not only allowed anti-Semitism to grow but also increased the

courage of convicted anti-Semites to openly state their prejudices. The connection of anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism has a longer history, but has only now received public legitimation through the new confrontation of the European Union with the USA. This does not mean that this connection would disappear again if there was an official condemnation - even if it was meant seriously; the condemnation would rather convince the adherents once more of the power of the Jews. It might be impossible to convert hardcore anti-Semites, but you can confront them, fight the official approval by the UN and the EU. Nothing strengthens an inhuman ideology such as anti-Semitism in a stronger way than its taking advantage of the reputation of respected institutions and carrying the banner of moral outcry about human rights violations. At the third United Nations World Conference against Racism, which took place from 31 August to 8 September 2001 in Durban, the discussions centred on incitement against Israel. Notably, Israel was the only state that was insulted as a racist state. In the preparatory negotiations, representatives of Jewish organisations were even exposed to physical attacks and in the context of the conference anti-Semitic literature was spread. Only after strong pressure from the US delegation did the conference's final resolution not equate zionism with racism and not omit reference to the Holocaust. The representatives of European states at the conference, on the other hand, did not appear to be anxious about the attempted whitewashing of anti-Semitic history in Europe. If you look at UN resolutions on the Middle East, the permanent one-sided condemnation of Israel, the exclusion of Israel from important UN bodies, the ignorance of the actions of Arab states and the PA, the siding of UN institutions with the PLO like the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People - all of it shows that the spirit of the 1975 Resolution that held zionism to be racism has remained the same even if the tone has become more moderate. This official support increases

Anti-Semitism because it is not related to an aggressive nationalism but to an institution that is respected worldwide and which pretends to promote peace, understanding and tolerance.

Bearing this context in mind, it is no coincidence that the war in the Middle East is used for a relativization of the Shoah. The Shoah was the realisation of an extermination-threat, which will be part of the world-wide anti-Semitism as long as it exists. This continuing threat is the central legitimation of Israel. If you wanted to question the legitimacy of a defence of Israel against its Arab and Palestinian neighbours on the grounds that Israel is engaged in a defensive fight against an anti-Semitic national project, then you would portray Israel as the real aggressor and you would try to equate the suffering of the Palestinians with the Shoah. This recasting does not bear the light of a reasonable analysis of facts, and in my opinion this is exactly the secret about the immunity against facts and arguments. You can talk forever, pile up facts, bring forward one argument after another, but you will not succeed against the decision to picture the Palestinians as victims.

The greatest danger today is that the globalisation critique, anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism which exist in the heads of millions of people is amalgamated into a common sense that is supported and used by European policy. There is no difference in the consciousness of an average Member of the European Parliament and an average German peace demonstrator and I consider this to be a mixture of naivete, moralism, anti-Americanism, anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism and an altogether serious danger.

It is against these trends that my efforts are directed.

Thank you very much.

¹ Europäisches Parlament 1999-2004, Ausführlicher Sitzungsbericht 09-10-2003, S. 6 Spalte 2.

² Interview with Meir Litvak. In: Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism, No. 5, February 2003, p. 5