
Mideast Peace

Peres: Germany should play a leading role

by Dean Andromidas

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres declared at a Bonn press conference on Aug. 22 that Germany should play a leading role in world affairs, and in support of the Middle East peace process in particular. During his visit to Germany, Peres met with Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and President Roman Herzog.

Commenting on his discussions with Foreign Minister Kinkel, Peres told the press that there had been "really a meeting of the minds." He added: "May I make two general observations. Let me say as an Israeli, I believe today the expectation is that Germany will begin to play a much more active and creative and political role in improving the state of the world, so today the world is watching Germany, in my judgment, not only in that it is able to get rid of the maladies of the past, but if it is willing to play a greater role in bringing medicine to many places in the world which are now suffering great pains. And the second observation: The Middle East was known as one of the most complicated regions of the world, where conflicts were very deep, very long . . . and today it stands as a region of great chance to heal its wounds, to overcome its prejudices, its hatreds, the belligerency of the past. I know that in a few days you will have the visit of King Hussein of Jordan, and he will come as a king who has turned to peace. . . ."

"I view Germany as the largest economy in Europe, and Germany today is the president of the European Union and is capable of aiding the building of peace in the Middle East. . . . We shall not stop with our efforts to build a new Middle East along the very same lines that Europe was created, namely a region with open borders, economic frontiers where everybody keeps his culture and identity, where all of us will cooperate to build a better future for our children in the region."

Peres's call for Germany to assume a leading role in international affairs echoed similar statements by President Clinton during his tour of Bonn and Berlin in July. It also represents an effort by the Israeli government to gain Germany's support in consolidating peace agreements among Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Kingdom of Jordan. Peres hopes to join Israel, the Palestinians, and Jordan in a Benelux-type of arrangement with open borders,

strong economic ties, and even a customs union. Germany's diplomatic weight, as well as economic expertise, could play a key role in galvanizing such a development.

'I am an optimist'

Although during the press conference, many questions dealt with the Iranian terror threat or the plutonium scare, Peres, whenever possible, was eager to return to the theme of Germany assuming its "responsibilities" as a world player. "You know I belong to the optimistic side of political opinion in our country," he said. "I believe that Germany on her own, and Germany as a state, and Germany in her political and economic capacity definitely can play a positive role in the world and in the Middle East. I do believe that this is the wish of the young generation in Germany; in my eyes, Klaus Kinkel is the young generation, too. I believe this is the trend. Generally I do not believe wars have a future, because the sources of modern wealth and modern might are not material but intellectual, and in war we cannot conquer wisdom, we cannot produce much to eat. If there will be wars in the future, in my judgment they will not be wars of conquest, nor wars by the strong against the weak, but by the weak against the strong, in protest, and the way to end these wars is not militarily, but economically. . . . Germany will become an important and positive player in world politics. This is reflected in the discussion about Germany becoming a member of the Security Council. This again represents an optimistic view of the German model."

In answer to a question by *EIR* concerning whether the peaceful use of nuclear power for water desalination would come up for discussion during his visit, Peres replied: "Well, on water, yes; nuclear power, I am afraid not, because nuclear power is highly problematic today, and we might separate water and nuclear power. We are afraid nuclear power may complicate our lives, although I believe it is an option for the future. And water is the most pressing issue in the Middle East; without finding a solution to it, I am afraid we will not be able to deal with a stable peace. We have discussed this afternoon the issue of water. . . . We have several desalination projects which are being offered today in the Middle East. Private companies can play an important part, not just governments. As you know, we are going to have, for the first time in the Middle East, an economic conference in Casablanca, Morocco, where businessmen from Israel, from Jordan, from Morocco, from America . . . will meet in order to see what can be done to develop the Middle East economically."

Germany is in an excellent position to help give economic content to the peace process. Germany is the first European country to establish a government office in Jericho, the capital of the Palestinian National Authority. The giant Daimler Benz group is currently involved in drafting a master plan for the development of infrastructure in the Palestinian territories, as well as the region as a whole. It is involved in several key transportation projects in Israel as well.