



THE BLACK TUESDAY OF 2001 – Part 3

Today, anybody who mentions dialogue, the stretching out of hands in reconciliation, is liable to be looked on as a dreamer. The American President repeatedly makes statements like “No dealings with terrorists,” or “Wanted dead or alive.” What will be the follow-up?

At this level of escalation nobody asks what has turned people into “terrorists.” Or what for that matter, it takes to overcome the strongest instinct, the instinct for self-preservation, to sacrifice one's own life and drag thousands of innocents to death in the process.

The First Austrian Peace Museum is trying to explore the genesis of all of this. Some of our peace leaflets explore this issue. The study of conflict shows that similar mechanisms are at work in the emergence of hostilities, both in small communities as well as in the community of nations.

It is important to show not only how conflicts can escalate, but also to identify causes which may prevent disastrous consequences. It is a mistake to superficially consider only the immediate trigger of a conflict. It is necessary to find out if previous developments, bad decisions and misjudgements were its cause. The assassination of the Austrian heir to the throne and his wife in 1914, or the seizure of power by Adolf Hitler in 1933 may serve as examples.

Years ago, I asked a Palestinian student how Israelis and Palestinians could reconcile. He answered, “If somebody takes away only one square meter of your real estate, you will be forever fighting to undo that injustice. Our land was taken, we were pushed into refugee camps and the world has just looked on. What can we do to alert the world to our misfortune?”

The bloody events during the Olympic games in Munich were not the last ones. Both sides have contributed to violence since then. There is a danger that this incalculable conflict, reinforced by the Black Tuesday of 2001, may unleash a new wave of anti-semitism. I will be the first one to hold a protective hand over these victimized peoples, but I will also appeal to their reason and reflection.

We have begun to understand our characters as human beings, beginning with Cain and Abel. By doing so we have found some hope, but we have not yet found the answers. We lack solidarity. However, those two words “Not” and “Yet” may perhaps be all we need to steer our planet towards future worth living.