Cold War History
Vol. 12, No. 4, November 2012, 595–614

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Schönau and the Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution: refugees, guerillas, and human rights in the global 1970s

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In September 1973 a group of Palestinian guerillas attacked a train carrying Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union to Austria for relocation to Israel. The ensuing international crisis exposed the intricate web of political relations behind this flow of refugees and drew worldwide attention to the conflict between the human rights of Jewish refugees immigrating to Israel and those of Palestinian refugees who wished to return to their homeland. Ultimately, the Schönau incident would illuminate the contested nature of humanitarian concerns in the 1970s and the wider Cold War era.

In recent years, historians have begun to pay increasing attention to the role of human rights in international affairs. This growing body of literature has sought to explain the origins of the concept of human rights and its transformation during the Cold War period, particularly during the 1970s. While this burgeoning subfield represents a welcome addition to the discipline, it is not without its shortcomings. As Samuel Moyn has observed, the literature on human rights has too often fallen 'into teleology, tunnel vision, and triumphalism.'[1] Further, recent scholarship has often approached the topic from US and European perspectives and downplayed – implicitly and explicitly – the importance of human rights in non-Western discourse.[2] Many of these

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[1] Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010), 311.

[2] The literature on human rights and global history includes Roland Burke, *Decolonization and the Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); Moyn, *The Last Utopia;* Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007); Sarah Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011); Michael

ISSN 1468-2745 print/ISSN 1743-7962 online

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2012.665368
http://www.tandfonline.com

works argue persuasively that the plight of Soviet Jews during the 1970s, and the *Refuseniks* in particular, helped to spur the international community to action on the issue of international human rights.[3] What has remained unexamined, however, is the often-violent opposition to this flow of refugees, much of which came from Palestinian Arabs and their supporters. Using Austrian, Arab and American sources, this essay seeks to complicate this historiography by examining the attack on the Schönau transit facility by a group of Palestinian guerrillas in late September 1973 as a telling historical episode in which states and transnational actors grappled with the challenge of balancing competing humanitarian concerns and national security interests. Rather than a straightforward story of good versus evil or a triumphalist narrative, this essay presents a more textured picture of two refugee communities, each suffering under different forms of oppression and struggling to draw international attention to their plights. Moreover, it offers a sustained engagement with the often-neglected perspectives of non-European peoples on the question of human rights in the international arena. In this manner, the incident provides a window into the changing global landscape of the 1970s.[4]

Such perspectives have become increasingly vital as scholars have come to recognise the centrality of the Third World in the larger story of the Cold War. As the superpower conflict moved into the developing world, the US–Soviet rivalry intensified and took on broader stakes. As Odd Arne Westad has explained, the 'Cold War in the Third World was not just a battle for influence between Washington and Moscow; it was a struggle within the new states for the future direction of their politics and their societies, a conflict between two versions of Western modernity.'[5] As scholars have come to devote greater attention to the role of human rights debates in shaping these conceptions of modernity and bringing about a relaxation of Cold War tensions, the impact of actors in the developing world – and the often

Footnote 2 continued

Cotey Morgan, 'The Seventies and the Rebirth of Human Rights', in *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective*, ed. Niall Ferguson, Charles Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel Sargent (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Kenneth Cmiel, 'The Emergence of Human Rights Politics in the United States', *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1999); Hunt, Jeffrey Wasserstrom, and Marilyn Young, eds., *Human Rights and Revolutions* (Lanham: Rowan and Litttlefield, 2000); Paul Gordon Lauren, *The Evolution of International Human Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

[3] On Soviet Jews, see Gal Beckerman, *When They Come for Us, We'll Be Gone* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2010); Noam Kochavi, *Nixon and Israel* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009); Baruch Gurevitz, *Open Gates: The Story Behind the Mass Immigration to Israel from the Soviet Union and its Successor States* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency, 1996); Murray Freeman and Albert Chernin, eds., *A Second Exodus: The American Movement to Free Soviet Jews* (Brandeis University Press, 1999).

[4] For a provocative collection of essays on the 1970s as a pivotal decade in the process of globalisation, see Niall Ferguson, Erez Manela, Charles Maier, Daniel Sargent, eds., *The Shock of the Global* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010).

[5] Odd Arne Westad, 'The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, ed. Melvyn Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 10.

controversial views they held – have become all the more critical to the historical narrative.[6]

Though overshadowed by the outbreak of the Fourth Arab Israeli War, the Schönau attack reveals an intricate web of transnational tensions that lay just beneath the surface of the unfolding human drama. The attack – in addition to representing an intriguing and virtually unstudied incident – illustrated a simple but often overlooked principle: although they may have been couched in claims of universality and political neutrality, humanitarian concerns were fluid and often deeply contested, particularly when placed in a transnational context.

Located at the juncture of local interests and international affairs, the events of late September 1973 also present a revealing portrait of the rifts in the emerging international community of the 1970s. The attack and subsequent hostage crisis set off an international controversy that exposed deep fissures in world opinion regarding the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel, the issue of transnational political violence, the extraterritorial privileges of Israeli immigration agencies, and ultimately, the meaning of human rights in the international arena. Indeed, the incident showcased the emerging split between what Moyn has described as two competing definitions of international human rights: the first sought to realise human rights within the framework of postcolonial sovereignty whereas the second envisioned these rights as the protection of the individual against the predations of the state. [7] These competing paradigms clashed on the world stage in the wake of the attack as various parties cast the flow of Jewish immigrants to Israel alternately as a target, a weapon, a breach of national sovereignty, and a contested symbol in the increasingly globalised world order. The matrix of global interconnections would act not only as a conduit for exchange but also as a prism, refracting the array of competing interests raised by the attack. In short, for the Soviet Jews, their arrival in Israel represented salvation at the end of a long road to freedom; for Palestinians longing for self-determination and sovereignty, it represented another setback in a decades-long struggle marked by bloodshed, heartbreak, and shattered hope. The attack would reveal both dimensions of this story and serve as a point of connection between the struggle for Israel/Palestine taking place in the Middle East and the saga of Soviet Jews seeking freedom from the oppression of the Soviet state.[8] Ultimately, the incident highlighted what was and still remains a significant challenge for the global human rights regime: how to provide justice for *both* Jewish and Palestinian refugees within the restrictive framework of the nation-state system.

At 10:30 on the morning of 28 September 1973, two Palestinian guerilla fighters commandeered a train traveling from Moscow to Vienna just after it passed over the

[6] On the importance of transnational human rights and the end of the Cold War see Snyder, *Human Rights Activism and the End of the Cold War.*

[7] Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 4.

[8] For a moving account of the struggle of Soviet Jews seeking to flee the Soviet Union, see Gal Beckerman, *When They Come for Us, We'll Be Gone* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2010).

border between Czechoslovakia and Austria. Their target was not the train but its cargo: several dozen Soviet Jews bound for Vienna en route to Israel. After shooting the train's engineer, the gunmen seized three of the émigrés and one customs official as the train was stopped at the Marchegg border station. The guerillas then forced their hostages into a Volkswagen bus parked nearby and sped off toward Vienna.[9] The hostage-taking marked the beginning of what was to become an international spectacle that would hold much of the world's attention over the first week of October 1973 and present a challenge to Austrian neutrality in both the Arab–Israeli conflict and the Cold War.

These deeper historical implications were of little concern to the participants in the harrowing attack, however. While Austrian security forces cleared the train in Marchegg, the bus containing the hijackers and their hostages drove toward Vienna's Schwechat Airport, parking on the tarmac beneath an Iberian Airlines DC-9. The guerillas failed in their attempts to enter the aircraft and were soon surrounded by Austrian police. While the runways and the roads to the airport were barricaded, sharpshooters took positions on the roof of Schwechat's main terminal and police opened communication with the gunmen, who had locked themselves with their hostages in the Volkswagen minibus. The guerillas sat between the hostages holding fragmentation grenades and Bulgarian manufactured Kalashnikov sub-machine guns and pistols. The gunman in the front seat held the pin to a grenade between his teeth. The hijackers informed Austrian police that they were members of a 'suicide squad' with no concern for their own lives; if they failed in their mission, they would be killed by their comrades upon returning home. Further, they warned police that they would not tire: they had been awake for fifteen hours prior to the attack and, with the help of the tablets that they had swallowed, they could remain awake for another four days. Police psychiatrists confirmed that the gunmen seemed to be under the influence of amphetamines.[10]

The hijackers released a statement to the police identifying themselves as members of a group called The Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution and attributing their decision to attack the train to the conviction 'that the immigration of Soviet Union Jew form a great danger on our cause.' They explained in broken English,

> We haven't done this mission because we are murderers by nature, but because of the crimes of Zionists who bombed our camps, killing our infants and children, women and olds, or when they murder our leaders by meager methods and because they had declared that they will fight and destroy our people any where will be found. We have done it because we have rights, have the will of determination and decision, to fight the Zionist wherever can be found, as ever as they are recruits to the enemy. It is not

[9] Terence Smith, 'Guerillas Seize 3 Soviet Jews on Train, Then Release them in Austrian Deal', *New York Times*, 29 September 1973.

[10] 'Report by Ministerial Counselor Erben, Ministry of the Interior, on the events at Vienna/Schechat Airport', 'Report by the Psychiatrists Professor Friedrich Hacker and Dr. Willibald Sluga', and 'Report by A. Massak, colonel of police and explosives expert in the Ministry of the Interior', in *The Events of September 28th and 29th 1973: A Documentary Report*, ed. Federal Chancellery, Vienna (Vienna: Norbertus, 1973), 50–61.

> our first strike, it will not be the last, and nothing we will accept but liberating our land by force.

The hijackers also warned authorities that they had each received orders to shoot their comrades rather than surrender to police. While the gunmen exchanged messages with Austrian officials and several Arab ambassadors, Austrian police discussed the prospect of shooting both men in the head – the explosives expert on scene was convinced, after having performed a number of experiments on animals, that there would be virtually no chance of a reflex in which one of the fighters might pull the pin to a grenade. Other police on the scene suggested the possibility of drugging the guerillas' coffee or piping some sort of sleeping gas into the Volkswagen. Austrian security officials were also distracted by the appearance at 10:30 pm of an apparently inebriated man who had gained entry to the scene by claiming to be an army marksman. The man, who was armed with a Walther PPK pistol, managed to make his way to the guerillas' vehicle and engage one of the gunmen in conversation over a cup of coffee before being escorted away by the police. These complications aside, the negotiations continued until 1:25 the next morning when Austria's Chancellor, Bruno Kreisky, announced over national radio that in accordance with the guerillas' demands, his government would halt all 'group transports' of Soviet Jews through Austria and close an immigration staging facility just outside of Vienna. Fifty minutes later, the hijackers released the hostages and boarded a twin-engine Cessna aircraft, bound for Damascus.[11]

The hostages – an Austrian border official, a young man in his twenties and a couple in their sixties – were frightened by their experience, but unharmed. During the course of negotiations, the Austrian cabinet had brought together several Arab ambassadors and established a direct telephone line with the Government of Israel, which remained adamant that the hijackers not be allowed to board the plane with their captives. However, the price paid for the hostages' freedom was high: Vienna would prohibit the large-scale transit of Soviet Jews through its territory and, most dramatically, shut down the immigration facility at Schönau Castle, twenty miles south of the capital. 'I cannot accept that the Austrian government will give in to the demands of two terrorists,' the shocked Israeli Ambassador to Austria, Yitzhak Patish, remarked. 'The joy we all share over the release of the hostages would be diminished if Austria accepts the political demands of such an obscure group.'[12]

Schönau Castle was indeed a great prize for the Palestinian fighters. The facility was Israel's principle clearing-house for European émigrés – immigrants from North Africa were processed in Marseille while those from South America passed through a

[11] 'Manifesto issued by the Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution during the groups involvement in the Schoenau incident', 28 September 1973, *International Documents on Palestine* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1973), 469; 'Aide-memoire by Dr. E. Schuller, Director of Security for Lower Austria,' *The Events of September 28th and 29th 1973: A Documentary Report*, ed. Federal Chancellery, Vienna (Vienna: Norbertus, 1973), 73–79; 'Terrorists leave Austria,' *Chicago Tribune*, 29 September 1973.

[12] Terence Smith, 'Guerillas Seize 3 Soviet Jews on Train, Then Release them in Austrian Deal', *New York Times*, 29 September 1973.

facility in Naples. In recent years, Schönau had become increasingly important as a flood of Soviet Jews fled anti-Semitism and the oppressive institutions of the communist state. As the plight of the Soviet Jews became an international human rights cause at the beginning of the 1970s, a combination of political agitation and international criticism led Moscow to ease its restrictions on emigration. Many of those Jews who managed to gain permission to leave made *aliyah* – the immigration to Israel, endowed with deep cultural meaning. The compound itself comprised an expansive 400-acre Hapsburg estate containing a twelfth-century castle and a nineteenth-century hunting lodge. The castle had been leased by the Jewish Agency – the quasi-official organisation charged with coordinating the flow of immigrants to Israel – in 1965 and converted into the first stopping point for Jewish immigrants bound for Israel. The grounds were surrounded by barbed-wire fences and guards armed with Israeli-made sub-machine guns. In the two years preceding the attack, the facility had channelled over 60,000 Soviet immigrants bound for Israel.[13]

Schönau and Austria occupied a special position in international affairs. The facility itself was necessary largely due to restrictions on direct flights between the Soviet Union and Israel. Schönau served as a stopover for Russian Jews en route to Israel and provided Israeli authorities with a means of coordinating the final leg of their journeys. Moreover, as a neutral country in both the Cold War and the Arab–Israeli conflict, Austria was uniquely suited to serve as a corridor for this immigration. It would be this dual neutrality, however, that would ultimately emerge as a point of contention in the international debate that broke out following the hostage taking. As some players would argue in the coming months, Schönau's presence effectively undermined Austria's neutrality in the Arab–Israeli dispute and was thus an affront to Arab and Palestinian interests in international affairs.

News of the events in Austria touched off an international outcry. The Israeli government reacted to Vienna's announcement that it would be closing the operation with harsh criticism, one official going so far as to announce, 'The Arabs have won a tremendous victory.' Representatives from the Jewish Agency called Vienna's move 'unconscionable.' Teddy Kolleck, Mayor of Jerusalem, attacked Chancellor Kreisky's 'cowardly submission to Arab terrorists.' Leaders in Washington were equally distraught. Senator Henry Jackson decried Austria's decision as the 'most serious and short-sighted intimidation and blackmail.' Senator and former Democratic candidate for president Hubert Humphrey lamented that the castle's closure represented a 'blow to human rights, which always exceed national boundaries.' While the State Department declined to comment on Austria's decision, it announced its regret that 'terrorists' actions should succeed in placing additional hurdles in the way of persons exercising a basic human right of emigration.'[14]

[13] 'Jewish camp kept obscure', *Chicago Tribune*, 3 October 1973; Terence Smith, 'For Jews from Soviet, Fear and Joy in Vienna', *New York Times*, 28 September 1973.

[14] Harry Trimborn, 'Israel Astonished, Bitter Over Austrian Transit Camp Closure', *Los Angeles Times*, 30 September 1973.

This outcry was particularly troubling for Vienna, which had worked hard to distance itself from Austria's Nazi past. Mayor Kolleck noted the irony that it had been Kreisky who made the decision: the Jewish chancellor had narrowly escaped detention in Dachau during the 1940s; his brother lived in Israel.[15] In this regard, the brewing crisis foreshadowed coming debates in Austria. Over the course of the 1970s, Kreisky himself would emerge as one of the most prominent European statesmen advocating recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), calling for the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians in the coming months and then advocating in favour of a Palestinian state by the mid years of the decade. In October 1979, Kreisky would announce to the UN General Assembly that Austria would recognise the PLO. Even as the chancellor embraced the cause of Palestinian liberation, however, a broader social transformation was gripping his nation.[16]

Israel's Prime Minister, Golda Meir, admonished the Austrian government: Israel's enemies in the Arab world, 'unable to exterminate us, are now trying to attack us everywhere else in the world and are trying to frighten Jews against coming to Israel.' Like Humphrey, Meir argued that the assault on Schönau threatened a very basic principle in international human rights and a matter of paramount concern for Israel: the right of free movement across international borders. Calling on Vienna to reverse its decision, Meir warned that, 'Whoever accepts the conditions of terrorists only encourages them to pursue their criminal acts.'[17] American Jewish organisations expressed shock and outrage over Vienna's move and called for an immediate reversal of the decision. 'This yielding to the blackmail of Arab terrorists is immoral and unbecoming a sovereign state,' one telegram argued, 'the action by the Austrian Government in refusing entry to Israel-bound Jews is reprehensible and merits the condemnation of the entire civilised world.'[18] Meanwhile, the Secretariat of the radical Jewish Defense League threatened to unleash a worldwide terror campaign against Austrians.[19]

American newspapers attacked the Austrian decision as a 'bloodless triumph for the "terrorists"' and a tragedy for Soviet Jews who had used Austria 'as a way station to freedom.' The *New York Times* blasted the decision, which was 'obviously based on the fatal misconception that if only the Soviet Jews would stop entering Austria . . . then the murderous Arab terrorists would disappear and Austria could go on enjoying its post-World War II prosperity and peace.' However, the editors insisted, 'Far from winning peace and quiet by surrendering to Arab blackmail, Dr. Kreisky is inviting every possible fanatic who can get a gun to try to duplicate this Austrian success.' Striking an ominous tone, the editors warned, 'The failure of nerve in Vienna can only encourage the forces of world chaos, and weaken still further the none-too-strong

[15] Ibid.

[16] See Otmar Holl, 'The Foreign Policy of the Kreisky Era', in *The Kreisky Era in Austria*, ed. Gunter Bischof et al. (New Bruswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 43–44.

[17] 'Austrians Asked to Keep Camp', *Hartford Courant*, 1 October 1973; Terence Smith, 'Israelis Are Hopeful', *New York Times*, 2 October 1973.

[18] 'Israel Opposes Austrian Decision on Transit Facilities', *New York Times*, 30 September 1973.

[19] Homan, 'Austria Seeks Émigré Plan.'

underpinnings of international order and law.' In the same vein, the *Hartford Courant* attacked Vienna's decision to cave in to 'the demands of two Arab fanatics,' a decision which marked a 'major victory for the vicious wave of terrorism that has shaken the structure of international law and order in recent years.'[20]

One of the most telling articles, written by Max Lerner, appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*. Lerner, a Russian-born champion of the rights of Soviet Jews who would make the transition from liberal to neo-conservative in the 1970s, denounced Vienna's decision to close Schönau. The move had been a craven surrender that 'delighted the [Palestinian] guerilla organisations, dismayed the Israelis, embarrassed the Russians, spread despair among emigrants waiting to leave Russia for Israel.' There was still some hope, however: Kreisky and the Austrian people were dismayed at the 'near unanimous world protest against his cave-in.' Lerner explained,

> The recoil from the surrender to blackmail may prove a healthy thing in the long-range struggle against terrorism . . . what is involved here goes beyond the vague concept of world opinion. It reaches to the idea of a world intellectual and moral community which cuts across national boundaries and even ideologies . . . When a weak-kneed surrender to terrorism in Vienna evokes the world response that it does, then we may not have arrived at a moral consensus, but we have taken the first steps and we are on the way.

Lerner's editorial – and similar pieces in other American newspapers – proposed a clear picture of a conflict between civilisation and barbarism. Would the civilised nations of the world, united by Lerner's world moral consensus, be resolute enough to stand up against the barbarian onslaught of the Palestinian 'terrorists' and their cowardly sympathisers?[21]

This use of civilisation-versus-barbarism binaries was not unique to social commentators like Lerner. In a battery of questions addressed to the UN General Assembly, Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban made it clear that the stakes at Schönau were greater than the fate of a few émigrés. 'What is the future of a world in which two pirates and criminals can bring a proud nation to the acceptance of their terms,' he asked.

> What are the implications of transactions and engagements between civilised governments and violent extortionists? Who is going to rule our world – governments or gunmen? . . . Can law and civility triumph if they are not strongly defended? Can a decent international public order take root in the world if indulgence beyond their own expectation is shown to those who put pistol to the head of unarmed wayfarers?

The larger implications, according to Eban and his government, concerned the nature of the coming world order. Who would define the international order in the age of three worlds? Moreover, who would have the privilege to draw the imagined line

[20] Terence Smith, 'A Triumph of Terror over Compassion', *New York Times*, 30 September 1973; 'Surrender to Terror', *New York Times*, 1 October 1973; 'Yielding to Blackmail', 2 October 1973.

[21] Max Lerner, 'Stirrings of a World Community', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 October 1973.

between civilisation and barbarism? The choice, implied by Eban, was effectively one of civilisation versus anarchy. His criticisms – much like Lerner's – struck at the heart of the matter, although not necessarily in the ways he intended.[22]

Although he claimed to be addressing a problem of global concern, Eban's motives were understandably patriotic: Israel found itself embroiled in a shadow war against violent groups of guerilla fighters who owed much of their success to so-called terrorist tactics that targeted Israeli soldiers, officials, and civilians. Making matters worse, these same guerillas made internationally recognised claims to substantial tracts of territory occupied by the state of Israel and were fast gaining support in international arenas like the United Nations and the Conference of Non-Aligned States. With this in mind, Eban located much of the blame for the Schönau attack on the UN's failure to pass substantive anti-terrorist initiatives, explaining that there was 'no effective antiterrorist majority in the United Nations.'[23] This notion that Schönau was a test case for the larger question of world order appeared in the White House's statements as well. President Richard Nixon insisted, 'We simply cannot have governments – small or large – give in to international blackmail by terrorist groups.'[24]

The real picture was more complicated than the one that US and Israeli commentators painted, however. Indeed, Palestinian fighters – the alleged terrorists and agents of chaos – called for the realisation of many of the very same humanitarian ideals that Nixon, Humphrey, Meir, Eban, and Lerner identified as the hallmarks of a world community. Although the Palestinians and their supporters espoused a political agenda that was squarely at odds with those of leaders like Meir and Nixon, they too laid claim to the discourse of human rights, international law, and the importance of creating a functioning global community based on shared values. The leading guerilla organisation in the PLO, Fatah, fashioned itself as a national resistance movement fighting for self-determination against a colonial regime. The Palestinians, according to Fatah, were fighting for the same set of rights that had been spelled out in two of the core documents of the international human rights regime: the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[25] In forums like the UN Conference on Human Rights, Fatah representatives argued that the heart of the Palestinian question concerned the struggle for human rights and that the solution to this question must entail the restoration of those rights as set out in the UN charter.

> If human rights, fundamental freedom, justice and morality have one and the same value for human beings the world over, then the all-important question that arises is whether men and women of good will should not accept the challenge and give new impetus to their ideals and ethical precepts; indeed whether they should not translate into practice the self-evident truths which they see before their own eyes!

[22] Robert Alden, 'Eban, at U.N., Assails Austrian Decision', *New York Times*, 4 October 1973.
[23] Ibid.
[24] 'Terrorist Success', *New York Times*, 4 October 1973.
[25] Fatah, 'Statement by the Palestine National Liberation Movement "Fateh" to the United Nations on the Legality and Objectives of the Palestinian Resistance', 17 October 1968, *IDP*, 451.

> . . . What we are asking for [is an] application of the rules and principles of international law and a respect for the worth and dignity of the human person.

Palestinian arguments drew from the same human rights discourse that formed the basis of Western and Israeli arguments which claimed that the struggle against 'terrorism' amounted to a battle between civilisation and barbarism.[26]

Likewise, Palestinian fighters insisted that the greatest obstacle to the creation of a world community consisted not of acts of revolutionary violence – what Israeli and US commentators would call terrorism – but from the lingering effects of Western colonialism and the growing problem of neo-imperialism in the Third World. Fatah's leader, Yasir Arafat, insisted that the Palestinian struggle was part of the global battle 'against imperialism, racism and colonialism.' Moreover, as growing numbers of states around the world began to argue in support of the Palestinian cause – and in condemnation of Israeli actions in the Middle East and US actions in Southeast Asia – in forums like the UN General Assembly, it was clear that a large segment of the world community agreed with leaders like Arafat. Put simply, human rights meant different things to different people, especially in the case of the Israel–Palestine dispute.[27]

Although the Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution did not represent the mainstream leadership of the PLO, they shared a common antipathy for facilities like Schönau. Far from being a politically neutral humanitarian issue, the immigration of Soviet Jews touched on the core grievances of the Palestinian people. As the hijackers had explained in their statement to Austrian authorities, the movement of Soviet Jews to Israel represented a clear threat to internationally recognised Palestinian claims to their homeland. The view – apparently widely held – in the Arab world was that Austria had abandoned its neutrality in the Arab–Israeli dispute by providing special assistance to Soviet Jews migrating to Israel. Far from being a centre for humanitarian activity – as far as the Palestinians and their sympathisers were concerned – Schönau was a staging ground for the on-going colonisation of Palestinian territory. Rather than being an attack on Israel, they argued, Vienna's decision to close the castle marked a return to neutrality in the Arab–Israeli dispute.[28]

Palestinian nationalists and their supporters pointed out that Jewish immigrants to Israel were being settled on the land – and sometimes in the actual houses – from which the Palestinian people had been expelled. In their minds, the two hijackers were attacking not a flow of *refugees*, but rather an invasion of *colonists*. As the editors of the

[26] It should be noted that although the Fatah was not involved in the Austrian attack, the organisation was one of the intellectual lodestars of the Palestinian liberation struggle, which minor groups like the Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution would have looked to for inspiration. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest that Fatah was directly involved in the Shoenau incident. Fatah, 'The Heroic Challenge Against Neo-Nazism', Address to the United Nations Conference on Human Rights, 27 April 1968 (Beirut: Palestine National Liberation Movement, al-Fateh, 1968), Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut.

[27] 'Al Fath Parle', *Jeune Afrique*, No. 383 (12 May 1968) 13, 50; for the rise in global support for the PLO, see Paul Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive*: *The United States, the PLO, and the Making of the New International Order* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, Forthcoming).

[28] Harry Trimborn, 'Camp Closure Pleases Arabs in West Bank', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 October 1973.

Christian Science Monitor noted, 'The Palestinians see the Soviet Jews being settled on land from which they were ousted. The Arab countries fear that the new arrivals will be given homes in the Arab territories captured by Israel in the June, 1967 war.'[29] Indeed, the hijackers' statements confirmed this interpretation. After landing in Libya, the guerillas announced their three goals in launching the operation: 'to stop the passage of Israel immigrants, to bring the voice of the Palestine revolution to Europe and to weaken Israeli military and economic power.' By interdicting Jewish migration to Israel, the gunmen hoped to accomplish all three of these.[30]

Viewed from the occupied West Bank, the situation was clear. 'Why shouldn't I be happy over something that may restrict the movement of foreigners from Russia who are coming to kick me off my land?' asked one Palestinian man. 'We are very glad over the Austrian decision,' commented another Palestinian woman, 'It has raised our spirits.' Mohammad Ali Jaabari, Mayor of Hebron, insisted that the 'humanitarian considerations' should go to 'those who were dispersed first – like the husband in Amman who cannot come home.' Indeed, if the fundamental issue lay in the restriction of human movement across political borders – as Golda Meir and Hubert Humphrey had argued – what group had more right to grievance than the Palestinians? His city, explained Mayor Jaabari, had at least 10,000 residents (out of a population of 54,000) who had family members who were now barred from returning to their homes.[31] By what set of standards, they asked, were the rights of Russian Jews fleeing Soviet oppression more sacred than the rights of Palestinian refugees seeking to return to their homeland?

Lebanese reactions to the news from Austria were similarly celebratory. In the days following the operation, Jordanian newspaper *Al Rai* had praised the attack as "the first serious and honest operation outside Arab territory"; a Lebanese businessman explained that the episode "was bloodless and accomplished a major political goal." The moderate Lebanese daily, *L'Orient-Le Jour* argued that the attack had been a major coup: in contrast to other 'pointless' operations, the Schönau attack had been well-executed and carried out against a target that was central to the war against Israel. The operation was 'coherent in motive, clear in objective, and logical in its conduct,' giving Palestinian '"action" new meaning and substance.' Meanwhile, in a statement to the press, the Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution praised Vienna's actions as having returned Austria to a position of genuine neutrality and repeated the justification for the attack on the grounds that Jewish immigration to Israel equated to 'occupation and usurpation' of Palestinian land. The group also warned the Austrian government not to renege on its promises; such a move would not be in the best interests of the nation and the safety of its citizens.[32]

[29] 'Austria and the Soviet Jews', *Christian Science Monitor*, 2 October 1973.

[30] 'Had Threefold Goal in Austria, Terrorists Say', *Los Angeles Times*, 1 October 1973.

[31] Harry Trimborn, 'Camp Closure Pleases Arabs in West Bank.'

[32] 'Bayan Munathama 'Nasur al'Thawra al-Filastiniya' huwal Qarar al-Nimsa bi-'Aglaq Mu'askar 'Shonaw' fi wahaha al-Mahajrin al-Yahud', 1 October 1973; *Al-Watha'iq al-Filastiniyyah al-Arabiyah*

Such arguments had little resonance with Israel's government and its supporters, however, whose humanitarian concerns lay not with the Palestinians living as refugees or under occupation on the West Bank, but with Jews fleeing Soviet oppression. On 1 October 1973, Prime Minister Meir announced that she would fly to Vienna in an effort to persuade Chancellor Kreisky to reconsider his decision to close Schönau, a move that she labelled 'the greatest encouragement to terrorism throughout the world.' The Palestinian guerillas, she explained, had 'placed the very basic, important principle of freedom of movement of people under a question mark.' Meir's alarm on this note hinted at a clear double standard: after all, Israel had made it a basic tenet of state policy for decades to restrict the freedom of movement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who wished to return to their places of birth. Indeed, the 1948 War that had created Israel produced a monumental refugee problem that was entering its third decade of existence, largely due to Israel's refusal to allow displaced Palestinians to return to their homes. The Prime Minister's conviction that freedom of movement was a basic human right had been, in Israel's case, applied most selectively.[33]

Kreisky was not swayed by Meir's visit. Support for his decision was high among Austrians who feared that their nation was being transformed into 'a secondary theatre of the Middle East conflict' and resented international attempts – particularly those of the United States – to pressure their government to change course. Responding to Meir's demands, he explained that, 'Austria and Israel are two different worlds.'[34] The local reaction to Kreisky's suggestion was generally positive. Average Austrians – according to State Department officers –saw the idea as a 'stroke of genius.' Many of those Austrians who had been critical of the chancellor's initial decision to close Schönau now viewed the situation in a different light. Indeed, Meir's visit had largely backfired, arousing resentment against Israeli attempts to interfere with what was perceived to be an internal Austrian affair. Likewise, the international condemnation of Vienna's conduct in the Schönau drama aroused public anger at what was seen to be an 'unfriendly, hypocritical outside world.'[35]

The decision to close Schönau was in fact the result of a number of considerations, none of them overtly anti-Semitic. Austrian officials admitted that the recent memory of the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics had cast a shadow over their negotiations with hostage takers. The goal of securing the safe release of the captives and avoiding a replay of the bloodshed that had taken place at Munich's airport the previous year had been Vienna's foremost goal. As one Austrian official explained:

Footnote 32 continued

(Beirut: al-Mu'assasat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyyah, 1976); 'Sadat Aide Dispatched To Austria', *Washington Post*, 3 October 1973; Robert Houghton to DOS, 'Beirut Reaction to Arab Terrorist Operation in Austria', 1 October 1973, AAD.

[33] Terence Smith, 'Israelis Are Hopeful.'

[34] Homan, 'Austrians Like Decision on Jews Despite World Reaction.'

[35] Humes quoted in Rush, 'Kreisky-Meir Meeting and Afternath', 4 October 1973, AAD.

> It is difficult to imagine that a rescue operation without any loss of life on the part of the hostages would have been possible. Six people were sitting cramped together in the cab of the Volkswagen. Each of the terrorists had a hand-grenade in his hand and both windows on the left side as well as the rear one on the right were constantly kept tightly closed.

None of the passengers had even been allowed out of the vehicle 'to relieve nature,' he added.[36]

According to Austrian officials, the hijackers' initial offer had been to hand over the Austrian hostage in exchange for passage out of the country with the remaining three Jewish hostages. These three would then be used to secure the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Thus, the decision to shut down the castle had been a compromise solution – apparently suggested by the Iraqi Ambassador to Austria – offered after Vienna's refusals to allow the guerillas to leave the country with their hostages and to enforce a total ban on Jewish immigration through the country.[37]

Moreover, though the Austrian public was divided on the question of Schönau, the plurality seemed to support the chancellor. While some papers attacked the decision, arguing that, 'Never before in the history of modern terrorism did a drama with hostages end so disgracefully . . . the (Austrian) government put itself on an equal footing with gangsters and made them bargaining partners,' many other dailies defended Vienna's actions. These publications argued that Schönau's closure was 'in the interest not only of Austrian security, but also the security of the Jews,' and pointing out that ultimately, 'the right of transit (through Austria) has not been curtailed.' The *Graz Socialist Neue Zeit* offered perhaps the most measured appraisal of the situation, explaining that the facility's closure represented the best development for all concerned,

> It was not Israel's foreign policy, but human lives which mattered at Schwechat. These lives were saved at a price which really is no price at all: a refugee camp will be closed . . . even the Israelis stated repeatedly that Schoenau invited Arab terrorists to stage so-called commando actions. There will be no such invitation any longer, but [this] does not mean that Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union can no longer stop over in Austria. They will be able to do this also in the future – at lesser risk.

If the press was divided over Kreisky's decision, it was more unified in its resentment over international scorn directed toward Austria. *Kronen-Zeitung* argued that, had the world's reaction 'not been so loud,' Austria would have been able to quietly replace Schönau with alternate facilities.[38] Austrian officials expressed similar dismay, explaining to the US Ambassador, John Humes, that the reaction to Vienna's handling

[36] 'Extracts from a statement by Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky to the National Assembly on October 23rd 1973', in *The Events of September 28th and 29th 1973: A Documentary Report*, ed. Federal Chancellery, Vienna (Vienna: Norbertus, 1973), 38.

[37] Robert Aldens, 'Austrian Tells of Bargain with Gunmen', *New York Times*, 5 October 1973; Richard Homan, 'Austrian Deal With Arabs Hit', *Washington Post*, 20 September 1973.

[38] Quoted in John Humes to Department of State (DOS), 'Press Reaction to Terrorist Attack', 1 October 1973, Central Foreign Policy Files, Access to Archival Databases, National Archives, United States, archives.gov (henceforth AAD).

of the situation was 'unjustifiably negative and generally unappreciative' of the fact that the hostages had been released alive.[39]

Chancellor Kreisky explained that the presence of such a large and politically volatile installation on Austrian territory had become a significant security threat to the country. 'We will continue to let everyone pass through in transit, but we cannot offer them any facilities because to do so invites armed men from all sides. Only today, we have had to detain four armed men at Marchegg.' The detainees, as it turned out, were Israeli security agents operating on Austrian territory and charged with guarding an incoming group of Jewish immigrants.[40] Vienna was struggling to avoid having its territory transformed into a battlefield in the war between Israel and the Palestinians.

Such concerns were not unjustified. In the wake of his decision to close the facility, Kreisky presented evidence of an earlier plot to bomb Schönau. In February 1973, Austrian authorities had arrested six Arabs traveling with false Israeli passports. Under interrogation, the men sketched several accurate maps of the castle and its security detail and outlined a plot that called for a twelve-person commando squad to 'blow up' the facility and 'take hostages.' Indeed the facility had been the target of a number of recent threats dating back at least to 1970. In light of these threats, the Austrian gendarmerie had been forced to increase its commitment to Schönau to 100 men; by comparison Austria maintained 523 gendarmes for the entire province of Vorarlberg.[41]

Coming on the heels of the 1972 Munich Olympics Attack and the March 1973 Embassy Attack in Khartoum, such an operation would have brought the war between Palestinian guerillas and Israeli intelligence operatives to the heart of Austria. Under the auspices of a special operation codenamed 'Wrath of God,' clandestine Israeli assassination squads were moving through Europe leaving a trail of bodies – Palestinian and European, civilian and combatant – and transforming the continent into a battleground in the war between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Kreisky had concluded that,

> the lives of the emigrants accommodated at Schoenau were in extreme danger, in particular after the events at Munich . . . the same was true of members of the gendarmerie stationed there. I also had to face the fact that if there were a terrorist attack at or near Schoenau, the Austrian population might become concerned that Austria's standpoint was threatening to make it a secondary theatre of operations in the Middle East conflict.

As the conflict escalated, Vienna had become increasingly apprehensive about the transformation of Schönau into a *de facto* piece of sovereign Israeli territory. Schönau

[39] Humes to DOS, 'Foreign Office Comment on Terrorist Incident', 29 September 1973, AAD.

[40] Ibid.

[41] 'Gelandeskizze von Schloss Schoenau,gezeichnet am 20.2.1973, von GARIR Guergues', 'Von GARIR gezeichnete Skizz uber Schloss Schoenau', 'Von Samir Ahmed ISSA am 19.2.1973 gezeichnete Skizze. Angeblicher Eisatzort, anlich dem Areal von Schloss Schoenau', and 'The Threat to the transit camp at Schoenau by Arab terrorists', in *The Events of September 28th and 29th 1973*, ed. Federal Chancellery; Richard Homan, 'Austria Seeks Émigré Plan', *Washington Post*, 6 October 1973.

existed in a state of 'informal extraterritoriality' in which the Jewish Agency controlled all access to the grounds. As one reporter explained, 'in the case of outsiders wishing to enter . . . permission is sought from the Israeli government and not the Austrian government.' Émigrés routinely violated their 24-hour transit visas after entering the facility – at which point Vienna lost any control over them – and sometimes left the camp to move into Austria as undocumented immigrants.[42]

As Austria's Foreign Minister, Rudolf Kirchschlaeger, explained, his government had been concerned for some time about the 'overorganisation' of the flow of Soviet Jews through Austria. 'The Israeli government's control of the castle made it almost foreign territory, a target for Arab terrorists and therefore a threat to Austrian security,' he told reporters. 'The facility represented a violation of our sovereignty.' Moreover, the Austrians had already arrested two groups of guerillas that had infiltrated the country with suspected plans of attacking the castle. The presence of an armed enclave under the administration of a semi-official agency of the Israeli government in the heart of Austrian territory raised far-reaching questions about state sovereignty and humanitarian operations on foreign soil. With these considerations in mind, Vienna was already considering closing the facility by the time the attack took place.[43]

Compounding matters in this already explosive environment, officials from the Jewish Agency had retreated from their earlier attempts to administer Schönau quietly. Outlining the details of a 1960 agreement between Vienna and the agency, Kreisky made it clear that promises of discretion had been a precondition. 'The Jewish Agency violated these conditions,' he explained, 'Schoenau became a part of the organised tour for people visiting Austria – you know, the second day 10 o'clock sightseeing to Schoenau, like that.' As the facility gained notoriety, it became increasingly difficult to protect. Two months prior to the attack, *Rudé právo,* Czechoslovakia's Communist Party Newspaper, identified the facility as 'one of the bastions of the Israeli secret police in Austria and, at the same time, a kind of centre from which people are transported to Israel by force if necessary.' Although it took a celebratory perspective of the camp, the *New York Times* ran a two-page story on Schönau, which most likely hit newsstands at the very moment the gunmen were seizing control of the train in Austria. Vienna's hopes of keeping the castle's operations quiet were dashed.[44]

Less widely known was the fact that that US taxpayers had provided a substantial portion of Schönau's budget. Washington had spent $500,000 on the facility's renovation and was spending approximately $40 per person on food and maintenance for each

[42] 'Extracts from a statement by Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky to the National Assembly on October 23rd 1973', in *The Events of September 28th and 29th 1973: A Documentary Report*, ed. Federal Chancellery, Vienna (Vienna: Norbertus, 1973); See also Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive;* Sarah Gainham, 'Austria as World's New Villain – A Case of Misunderstanding', *Los Angeles Times*, 7 October 1973.

[43] Shannon, 'Rejected Nixon's Plea Because of Soviet Factor, Austria Says', 5 October 1973; Aldens, 'Austrian Tells of Bargain with Gunmen', *New York Times*, 5 October 1973; Richard Homan, 'Austrians Like Decision on Jews Despite World Reaction', *Washington Post*, 5 October 1973.

[44] Homan, 'Austria Seeks Émigré Plan'; Homan, 'Austrian Deal With Arabs Hit'; Smith, 'For Jews from Soviet, Fear and Joy in Vienna.'

émigré. Likewise, the US government was providing $95 per émigré in transport costs. From President Nixon's initial allocation of $2 million in White House contingency funds in 1971, Washington's support for the transfer of Soviet Jews to Israel expanded the following year when Congress created a $50 million programme managed by the State Department to aid in emigration and resettlement. $44 million of the latter programme had been contracted to a private agency, United Israel Appeal, Inc., which was a subsidiary of the Jewish Agency. The existence of a facility guarded by foreign intelligence operatives, administered by a quasi-government agency embroiled in the transnational conflict between Israel and the PLO, and funded by one of the two belligerents in the Cold War created obvious problems for a state like Austria, which wished to maintain its neutrality.[45]

Given the desperate nature of the hostage standoff and the lack of desirable alternatives, the offer to close Schönau appeared to represent a double coup for Vienna: it would secure the safe release of the hostages and justified the closure of a facility whose presence had become increasingly problematic to the Austrian state, all without cutting off the flow of refugees from the Soviet Union. This diplomatic pirouette – executed literally at gunpoint – succeeded in practical terms, but the move's symbolic dimensions set off a political firestorm.

The chancellor did, however, suggest a compromise solution: the United Nations or some other international agency might intercede by assuming control of the facility. American observers explained that Kreisky's proposal, 'has great local appeal since it seems to say to [a] world aroused over [the] issue that it now has [the] opportunity to match its criticism with performance.' Further, US officials were receptive to Kreisky's proposal, but they warned that the United Nations might not be. 'We understand there may be some question whether Soviet emigrants would fall under the mandate of [the] UN High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR],' they explained. Established in 1950, the UNHCR's activities had focused on refugee crises such as those that occurred in the wake of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and more recently the string of emergencies following the decolonisation of Africa. The large-scale migration of Soviet Jews to Israel did not, in the agency's view, seem to constitute the same sort of emergency situation. Moreover, the agency would be 'most reluctant' to assume responsibility for the flow of immigrants to Israel for fear that doing so would risk compromising UNHCR activities in other parts of the world that required the cooperation of Arab and African governments. In the end, the international agency charged with addressing human rights issues saw the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel as less of a human rights concern than a political football in the Arab–Israeli dispute. As US officials predicted, the agency concluded that Schönau did not fall under its mandate and that taking control of the facility would be 'politically impossible.'[46]

[45] James McCartney, 'Reveal U.S. helped pay for Jewish Camp', *Chicago Tribune*, 4 October 1973; Tim O'Brien, 'State Dept. Has Paid $44 Million to Help Jews Leave Russia', *Washington Post*, 5 October 1973.

[46] Rush, 'Kreisky-Meir Meeting and Aftermath'; Rush to US Mission to the UN, 'Possible Role of UN or other International Agencies in Transit of Soviet Jews Through Austria', 3 October 1973, AAD; 'U.N. refuses to run Jewish refugee site', 4 October 1973, *Chicago Tribune*.

The drama at Schönau was soon overshadowed, however, by events in the Middle East. On the morning of October 6, Syrian and Egyptian forces launched a surprise attack on Israeli units occupying the Golan Heights and the eastern bank of the Suez Canal. The joint offensive caught Israeli military intelligence off guard and achieved impressive gains in the initial days of the war. Although the Israeli counterattack was able to turn back the Egyptian and Syrian assault, the Arab forces acquitted themselves well in intense fighting in both the Sinai Desert and the Golan Heights. From a gripping international drama that seized much of the world's attention, the Schönau attack was transformed into a side-story in the run-up to the largest conflict between Israel and its neighbours.[47]

Thus, the long-term impact of the Schönau attack was somewhat ambiguous. Vienna announced the closure of the facility on 10 December 1973 to relatively little fanfare. The Israeli government had been distracted by the affair and the joint Syrian–Egyptian offensive on October 6 had been a surprise. The PLO continued its ascent in international circles – which would culminate in Arafat's dramatic appearance in the UN General Assembly in 1974 – but the flow of immigration to Israel through Austria remained open and construction of Israeli settlements continued in the occupied West Bank. For its part, the Austrian government seemed all too happy to have stepped out of the international limelight. Henceforth, Vienna announced, Soviet Jews immigrating to Israel would be channelled through a Red Cross facility at an army camp in Wollersdorf where they would remain for no more than fourteen hours before being flown to Tel Aviv. In September of the following year, the Red Cross opened a new facility in a former convent just outside of Vienna. This new station soon came under public scrutiny, however, from neighbouring residents who resented both the potential for further attacks and the construction of barbed-wire barriers around the structure, which gave a 'bad impression' of the adjacent church, kindergarten and apartment buildings. In spite of this local resistance, Soviet Jews continued to have success in their search for freedom across the Austrian border. In late 1974, the US Congress passed the Jackson–Vanik Amendment, which brought US economic pressure to bear on continued Soviet efforts to impede the flight of its Jewish population. In the years following the passage of the amendment, over one million Russian Jews made the *aliyah* to Israel and another 573,000 settled in the United States.[48]

For historians, the events of late-September, early-October 1973 reveal the complex nature of human rights, political violence and national sovereignty in a global system. The Schönau attack was at once an act of transnational guerilla violence and a strategic

[47] Some commentators have suggested that the attack was designed as a diversion by Syrian intelligence services with the intention of distracting Israeli officials from Syrian and Egyptian preparations for the October War. For examples of this theory, see Patrick Seale, *Asad* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1988), 206; and Major Rodney Richardson, USMC, 'Yom Kippur War: Grand Deception Or Intelligence Blunder', *Global Security*, 1991, <globalsecurity.org>. (6/10)

[48] 'Austria Closes Jewish Camp', *New York Times*, 11 December 1973; 'Jews Again Face Vienna Protests', *New York Times*, 6 October 1974; 'Jackson-Vanik and Russia Fact Sheet', 13 November 2001, georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov (3/19/11).

gambit designed to bring the expropriation of Palestinian land by Israel to the world's attention. Certainly for the hostages and the state of Israel, the attack was a violent act carried out by 'terrorist' guerillas against unarmed refugees. For the Palestinians and their growing list of supporters, however, the operation represented a well-executed strike against a key point in the global network of Israeli power. The incident exposed the challenges of advocating universal conceptions of human rights: for Israel's supporters, freedom of movement across international borders as a basic human right applied to Soviet Jews but not to Palestinian Arabs; conversely, for Palestinian supporters, freedom of movement across borders was a priority for Palestinian refugees, not the *Refuseniks*. Self-interest, rather than cultural relativism, lay at the heart of these countervailing interpretations.

Prevailing discussions of the incident did not address the complexity of the issues at stake. The civilisation versus barbarism argument put forward by leaders like Meir, Eban, and Nixon, as well as writers like Lerner, sought to divide the world into two groups: supporters of Israel and sympathisers with the Palestinians. The former group made up a global moral community while the latter represented a horde of barbarians and terrorists intent on tearing down the trappings of civilisation and ushering in a new period of worldwide chaos. Such arguments put forward a picture of a world community that would function not as a multi-cultural society with a diversity of views but rather as an international oligarchy composed of the morally and intellectually right-minded. As such, they can be understood – much like the 'Clash of Civilisations'-style arguments of the post-Cold War era – as fundamentally tendentious.[49]

Likewise, the Schönau incident showcased the clash between the two human rights paradigms envisioned in recent historical debates. The Palestinians and their supporters identified with the paradigm that sought to realise human rights within the framework of sovereign nation-states.[50] In this view, the protection of human rights equalled the defence of Palestinian claims to their homeland and resistance against military occupation and colonisation. This conception embraced a collective, social definition of human rights. The supporters of the Jewish émigrés, in contrast, sought the realisation of human rights within the framework of individual protections. For them, the protection of human rights equalled the defence of the right of Soviet Jews to relocate to Israel. This second conception embraced a definition of human rights based on the protection of the individual against the power of the state. These two paradigms were not entirely contradictory, however. While it is true that they fought for the realisation of collective sovereignty in the form of a Palestinian state, such a state would surely provide better protection for the rights of individual Palestinians than that which existed in the refugee camps or under Israeli military occupation. Whether such a state would offer the same protections for its Jewish inhabitants is a matter for

[49] Max Lerner, 'Stirrings of a World Community;' for some examples of these type of arguments in the 1990s see Samuel Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations', *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993); and Bernard Lewis, 'The Roots of Muslim Rage', *Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990).

[50] See Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, 3–8, 117–18.

historical conjecture.[51] Similarly, while Meir and Nixon lambasted the guerillas for assailing the freedom of Jewish refugees to immigrate to Israel – an individualistic conception of human rights – they refused those same rights to the Palestinian refugees wishing to return to their former homes.

Thus, as an international perspective that accounts for Palestinian and Austrian as well as US and Israeli voices shows us, humanitarian concerns in the case of the Israel–Palestine conflict were neither clear-cut nor mutually exclusive. Nor were they, for that matter, taking place solely among Americans and Europeans. While the notion that 'one man's terrorist is another's freedom fighter' has become a cliché, in the case of the Schönau attack, it might also be said that one man's refugee is another's colonist. Conversely, from Vienna's perspective, one man's humanitarian was another's expatriate vigilante. For many observers in the 1970s, the emigration of long-oppressed Jewish minorities out of the Soviet Union represented a near-unassailable humanitarian good. Viewed from a different vantage point, however, this same flow of immigrants to Israel did inevitable damage to the interests of Palestinians living under military occupation in the West Bank and as refugees in the surrounding Arab world.

Popular reactions to the attack also provide insights on the production of international norms in the 1970s. As public statements by government officials and newspaper editorials reveal, many in the Western world embraced a vision of a nascent international order built on a world moral-intellectual consensus. It was this consensus that the gunmen in Austria had violated. The problem with this vision of global unanimity is that it remained largely a First World construct. Indeed, while much of the Western world did indeed express shock over the Schönau attack, most of the Arab world and large segments of the Global South viewed the incident through a different lens; so too did the 'weak-kneed' Austrian neutrals. What would become of these dissenting voices in the coming international order? Ultimately, if a global community could be said to exist, it was a community that remained deeply divided.

As the case of Schönau suggests, seemingly neutral humanitarian issues were often far more contentious than they first appeared, especially when transposed across a transnational spectrum. Schönau demonstrated the reality that concepts of human rights – such as the free movement of people across international borders – could be transformed into explosive issues when cast across an international spectrum. In reality, global harmony had little appeal for the members of the world community that considered themselves victims of on-going, historical injustices; peace would merely mean acceptance of the status quo. Thus it was that for a week in late 1973 the flow of

[51] There was a violent debate among the various Palestinian guerilla organizations over the prospect of a Palestinian state and whether such a state should exist in all of historic Palestine or as a smaller state alongside Israel. The former vision called for the creation of a secular democratic state in all of Palestine. While this would necessarily entail the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state, various theorists argued that the two communities, Jewish and Arab, might live side-by-side with mutual rights and protections as they had done so under the Ottoman Empire. It goes without saying that this argument gained few supporters in Israel. See Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive*; Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within* (London: Zed Press, 1985).

Soviet Jews to Israel appeared in front of the world not simply as a humanitarian issue, but also as a target for Arab militants, a weapon aimed at the future of the Palestinian nation, a violation of Austrian state sovereignty and contested terrain for competing visions of a coming international order. The challenge for the paradigm of international human rights that emerged in the 1970s was to reconcile the interests of the various peoples throughout the global system with competing and opposing claims rather than sorting them into groups of winners and losers. In the case of Jewish and Palestinian refugees at least, it proved unfit for the task.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Sarah Snyder, Ryan Irwin, Lien-Hang Nguyen, Sophie Roberts, and the two anonymous reviewers for providing comments on versions of this essay.