

diately.

In your last book you described France as “... A weird country where wandering from the point becomes legend, where the proximity of evil contributes to the mythology, where the fact of betraying a bit gives you a bigger size and height ...” How do you judge France which supported the idea of linkage before the breakout of hostilities?

This metaphor related to writers. French intellectuals – Jews and non-Jews – were not fooled by the linkage thesis, and to my surprise and satisfaction, massively opposed it. They agreed to address the Palestinian issue at the proper moment.

The politicians' stand is another story. I think François Mitterrand is sticking to what he said in 1982 when he addressed the Knesset. He remains a faithful friend of Israel, but became a demanding one, maybe too demanding, with whom the dialog will be difficult.

Isn't Mitterrand a leader under pressure, constrained by France's other Middle East prerogatives?

I don't think so. I have too much esteem for Mitterrand to doubt that all he does and says is the expression of his inner beliefs and his vision of a desirable historical course. He does pursue an Arab policy in the tradition of Charles de Gaulle, but the difference is that he's a friend of Israel.

You write that France historically has relentlessly searched for reasons to justify its anti-semitism. Isn't the French Left's rhetoric on the Palestinian issue, condemning Israel for its alleged “imperialist and expansionist repression” in the territories, a modern expression of this anti-semitism?

These are two distinct issues. I don't think the IDF can continue to act forever like an army of occupation and repression in the territories. It's not in keeping with this country's democratic foundations. I believe there is a Palestinian people and a Palestinian nationalism, because a people is defined by the mere fact that it sees itself as such, and establishes a contract of sociability that binds it together. I hope that one day this nationalism will be given satisfactory consideration.

Yet not only does this current situation exacerbate European antisemitism, but it is probably its only nourishment. Today's antisemitism in Europe is no longer because of Catholic obedience, or of a racist nature, or rooted in anti-capitalism, but of a new nature: anti-Zionist.

Were antisemitism to re-emerge tomorrow, in Europe or in the U.S., it would center on the reprobation of Israel, and would utter something like: “We have nothing against Jews, but we condemn their being accomplices of a criminal state, their making another people a new martyr people. Thus the Jews are the former victims who have become torturers.” That would be the face of the new antisemitism, were it to reemerge.

Hasn't the Gulf war changed this?

On the contrary, the Gulf war has given this hysterical dynamism a new impulse, by alleging that the war was waged for the sake of Israel. Hence, it is a source of antisemitism. For instance, the Greens recently held a particularly sickening debate over such allegations.