were not like that when downtown was downtown, with its crowds and its enormous variety of activities, projects and occupations swamping the places of worship and yet compatible with them. Although most of the centre is left, older people do not remember it as it was, because the buildings have been restored not to what they were but to their original ideal plans. These buildings which are more than a century old are like new-born babies, unmarred by the passage of time. We feel that the centre is artificial and imaginary, like a city built in a cinema studio; some have nicknamed it Disneyland. It has become Beirut's peep show and paradise, but not its centre as its name proclaims.

The other suburbs are crowded, compact, homogeneous - like castles possessing a sacrosanct quality; the inhabitants of Ein al-Roummane or Shiyah, for instance, will defend their territory with arms. The commercial centre, by contrast, is empty, neither fortified nor inviolate, in the eyes of those who live or work there. Its residents are subjected to the tyranny of everyone else, including the state, as happened in the days of «dialogue».

So the city becomes more confined, losing its different parts and even the centre for good. What takes place is a shifting bursts of building ad hoc and covetousness, as happened for instance in Verdun and Monot. When an area flourishes, it attracts residents and investments away from the centre, but then it turns out that this is not enough to establish another centre. You find big stores, for example, not in the commercial centre but in crowded residential quarters, like Monoprix and JBC in Ashrafieh. And so the dividing lines stay alive and the residents are mostly kept confined to their confessionally marked quarters.

Without a centre

A small city without a centre is likely to shut itself off into quarters. One only needs to think of Hamra. As soon as it started to loose its symbolic importance as a cosmopolitan and national laboratory and a centre of a modern urban culture, it sank into a kind of idleness, and its cramped space was clear to see. Most likely Hamra is not unique in that, either. The suburbs and the edges of the city, which are more or less like bunkers where one community dominates, grow and become rich thanks to the community concerned. With the end of the centre they disperse with the city and develop their own centres. The city no longer has any cultural ascendency or leading role, in fact nothing to distinguish it; it is simply one among the quarters. Thus the city has been partitioned into suburbs or cities, turned into multiple Beiruts. And of course at the same time as it fails to introduce a new national identity and general culture the state will be partitioned for good, a result of the Syrian Mandate and the civil war before it.

Various Beiruts

The parallel Beiruts are separated by symbolic distances. Many people, for instance, like to imagine the southern suburb as a jungle, miles away and lifeless, or the one where they spent their early teenage years. Ignorance to prove that it is shut off behind iron curtains, a kind of ideological barracks from which people come forth as mere ideological machines. But we don't find greater political and intellectual dynamism on the other margins. Recent times have shown that the education of Hizbollah provides is not something miraculous; it can be imitated and applied with great ease in other milieus. The capacity quickly to whip up a morbid susceptibility towards others, as well as the fear of being made an exception and isolated after the Syrian withdrawal, is what made the Phalangists and Hizbollah, and the Sunni Likem dye round Hariri's Trend of the Future; it is also Michel Aoun's secret. So there are no true distances between the various Beiruts.

One can speak of regression and degeneration all round. The example of the southern suburb and the south is literally being copied. The city, however, in comparison with the suburbs and even the different regions is the only area where mixing is still a reality, even if it rarely expresses a culture. It is a real intermingling, not various minorities living under the wing of a dominant minority. 

I In längst vergangenen Zeiten war der Libanon schon eine Oase der Freiheit in der arabischen Welt, ein Modell für das friedliche Zusammenleben, auf der Grundlage von Aufgeschlossenheit und Toleranz zwischen den verschiedenen Religionsgruppen. Er lieferte so ein Menschenrechts experiment, das den Respekt und die Akzeptanz des Anderen pflegt und auf jede Art Extremismus verzichtet. Dieses Merkmal von Ignoranz und Zurückgebliebenheit, das es sich um Kriege anderer handelte, welche die Schwächte des Staates nutzten, um Strassen, Quartier- oder Regionalstüklen einzurichten. Wie gestern halten die Libanesen auch heute an einem einzigen Libanon fest, an der Existenz eines einzig libanesischen Staates, hoheitlichen Gewissens, welcher den Religionen gleichermaßen respektiert werden, in dem weder eine Religionsgruppe. 

Nach einer Verankerung von staatlichem und staatlichen Institutionen, wo bei wir den Tag erheben, an dem der libanesische Staat die alleinige Verantwortung tragen wird für die Sicherheit, die Verteidigung und die Politik, für die Wirtschaft und für alle Aufgaben, die andere Staaten für ihre Völker und Länder erfüllen. Es soll ein Staat sein, in dem sich alle einfügen und um dessen Fahne sich alle scharen, ein Staat, der allein, mittels seiner eigenen Institutionen, Entscheidungen trifft und bei Auftreten von Meinungsverschiedenheiten Lösungen herbeiführt. 

Zur Verwirklichung dieses Ziels ist die Umsetzung einer Anzahl von Reformen und der Überprüfung einiger administrativer Arrangements nötig, die lange Zeit Gültigkeit hatten, aber die Loyalität des Bürgers auf seine Religionsgemeinschaft zugunsten der staatlichen Umsetzung der staatlichen Institutionen waren, die einen Staat auskosten musste, um die staatlichen demokratischen Regelungen einzuhalten. 

Das Abkommen von Phalange entsprach weitgehend dem Wunsch des libanesischen Volkes
Würden gehalten werden, auch wenn sie ihre Sache schlecht oder nicht machte und obwohl sie keine staatliche Funktion ausübte. Deshalb sind Dienstleistungen den Händen der Parteien und der Oberhäupter zu entziehen und zur auschließlichen Domäne des libanesischen Staates und seiner Institutionen zu machen. So wird der Bürger an den Staat gebunden, ihm seine Rechte garantiert, und nicht an die Partei oder das Oberhaupt einer Religionsgruppe, das daraus eine Waffe gegen den Staat und seine Institutionen schmieden kann.

Es gibt verschiedene Reformen, die wir in unserem Lande ins Auge fassen, um das libanesische Volk aus der Arena der konfessionellen Trennung und des religiösen und doktrinären Extremismus herauszubehalten. Dazu gehören besonders:

- die Überprüfung des Unterrichtswesens und der Lehrpläne, auf deren Vereinheitlichung auf den verschiedenen Stufen, im privat wie im öffentlichen Bereich ebenso hinzuwirken ist wie auf die Ausgliederung des Religionsunterrichts von den Schulen, die ihre Aufgabe auf die Erziehung, die Bildung und die nationale Unterweisung beschränken sollten; religiöse Unterweisung dagegen ist Aufgabe der Kirchen und der Moscheen und der Männer des religiösen Standes mit einer entsprechenden Ausbildung und Organisation, die dem Geist der Zeit und des friedlichen Zusammenlebens zu entsprechen hat, das Aufgeschlossenheit und Toleranz verlangt.

- die Überprüfung der Bestimmungen zur Bildung politischer Parteien und das Verbot, diese auf religiöser oder konfessioneller Basis zu gründen; Ausgangspunkt für Parteien hat ein politisches und gesellschaftliches Programm zu sein, das alle Bürger anhebt, damit die Partei sie alle politisch, gesellschaftlich und kulturell vertreten kann, nicht nur religiös oder konfessionell.

Deswegen wollen wir ein Parlament, dessen Mitglieder von den Bürgern auf der Grundlage politischer Projekte, wirtschaftlicher Programme und gesellschaftlicher Reformen gewählt werden, von dem die Ausländer und das beteiligte Volk, von ihnen ein Modell der höchsten und erhabensten menschlichen Beziehungen, für die Region und für die ganze Welt.

Aus dem Arabischen von Katrin F. Hollerich

**Continuation from p. 14 More than Beirut ...**

Historically, the city was Sunni and Orthodox, but now there is an interpretation which is neither entirely calculated nor decided. Numbers have no importance here, with the communities' homogeneous reservoirs existing close by. But the mixed character is the source of the city's weakness and its fear - not so much of confessional clashes but of being a prey to annexation.

Whereas the defence of the suburbs is a civic duty for their residents, the city is subjected to a peaceful «siege» which may seem like an appropriation and puts its mixed character at risk. Then, when the tide recedes, only small camps, spaces of rancour and avoidance, will be left. One can say that the city as a culture and way of life will become a disgrace to its people and a sign of weaknesses and reaction. And this in turn may call forth violent reactions; the paths of civil violence may escape the naked eye.

Adapted and translated by Hilary Kilpatrick

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**Hani Fahs**

**Lebanon's fear - or the fear of the religious communities**

The Sunni Muslims in Lebanon seem to regard their destiny with serenity. Even when they are fearful, they find reasons to regain their calm. They adapt their course confidently, not feeling forced to compete to realise fleeting, seductive achievements, but not relying or over-relying - either on their feeling of confidence and what inspires it, so as to become lazy or negligent. They do not regard themselves as marginal, and they accumulate aspirations, defeats and achievements without making a song and dance about them. In their common or daily discourse, you do not find a romanticism or suffering inspired by the homeland, for the homeland is axiomatic to them as they are axiomatic for it. The state, since it has existed as an Islamic and Arab caliphate or sultanate, or as a modern state, however fumbling, has been their affair in the first place. In and through it they have accumulated their knowledge, experience and civic sense, even though the state has not always been an unmixed blessing for them. The Sunnis stand in an Arabic and Islamic tradition, historical, geographical, demographic and geopolitical, which cannot be broken. And such being the case, any criticism can only touch on details, not the main principles. The Druze barricade themselves in the Mountain, looking out from it onto the homeland in the conviction that the homeland was formed from, by and in the Mountain in the first place. Mount Lebanon seems to define the Lebanese homeland, and only rarely has leadership come from outside it. Even the capital appears to the viewer in the first place as the capital of the Mountain. There is a Druze anxiety about numbers, but they make up for it by a concentrated political presence expressed in quarrelsomeness and almost permanent opposition from within and without the government; the Druze are perhaps the only community to exhibit this kind of ambiguity. It gives them a dynamism rich in surprises and contradictions. Thus, despite clashes and tensions, the relationship between the parties founded by Chamoun and Jumblatt, those two sworn friends or sworn enemies, is regularly patched up so that they coexist even though the fundamental differences between them do not disappear. Arabism, by contrast, is a vacillating component of Druze identity, resorted to when they feel cornered. But on the whole the Druze, trained observers of past, present and future, will take initiatives which go against the dominant tendency and reveal hidden aspects of national and regional parameters.

**Christian Communities**

Among the Christian communities, the Catholics enjoy a fairly stable measure of confidence, due to their being part of the world-wide bloc protected and controlled by the authority of Rome. This somewhat cosmopolitan condition frees them from the obligation to assume their own...