

A New Look at the Palestinian National Question

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Is the representative in Cuba of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

The Palestinian authorities still look forward to the possibilities of US pressure on the Jewish state. However, everything would seem to indicate that, although the United States is working with both sides, it is more flexible toward Israel

WHEN LOOKING BACK ON CONTEMPORARY historic events, we see that in practice the Zionist movement, backed by powerful European forces, achieved important strategic goals in 1948 with creation of the state of Israel¹, and other relatively important ones in 1967 in the heat of Zionist aggression against the Arab countries (Egypt, Syria, and the Palestinian territories in Gaza and the West Bank).

A well-organized and coordinated Zionist movement led to alliances with the developed capitalist countries, which in turn attracted the support of the most economically influential international forces.

The success of the Zionist movement was not serendipitous, but resulted from a favorable confluence of objective and subjective factors in the international arena. Meanwhile, the Palestinian and Arab national cause suffered from 1,000 years of backwardness and deterioration, above all during the last four centuries under the aegis of the Ottoman Empire.

As a result of the existing status quo, the early authors of Palestinian independence registered only defeats in the face



of a strengthening of colonial rule, the continued advance of the Zionist movement, and the impotence of the feudal Palestinian and Arab regimes. The particular conditions of our peoples at the end of the Ottoman Empire fostered weakness and internal divisions. That, together with the lack of any perspectives on how to achieve national liberation, led to a renewal of colonial control in the form of trusteeships and the split of the Levant under the Sykes-Picot Agreement.²

The national liberation movement, compromised by the interests and objectives of advancing colonialism, distanced itself from the peoples' movement and failed to forge alliances that would permit achieving the goals outlined by the authors of the independence movement, thereby abetting the victory of the Zionist movement.

After 1948, Israel didn't back away from its efforts to crush the Arab-Palestine renaissance.³ The goal was clear: stall the advance of the new Arab movement. However, the firm stance of Egypt and Syria and the upsurge in Palestinian resistance were an overwhelming response to the June 1967 defeat.

The aggressive colonialist conflicts and right-wing conspiracies of a political and class character against the PLO did not let up. In 1970, in what is known as "Black September", the Jordanian regime attacked the Palestinian revolution and, in 1975-1976, Palestinians in Lebanon and the Lebanese Nationalist Forces. In 1978 South Lebanon was occupied. Four years later, the full invasion of Lebanon reached the capital, Beirut, with the acknowledged intent of destroying the PLO.

Conspiracies on other fronts (Egypt and other countries of the Levant) to impose bilateral arrangements and the first and second Gulf Wars⁴ heightened the



1948-1967

struggle on both sides. But this did not prevent the strengthening of the Palestinian national program, which was – in some respects – successful, above all in recovery of the national identity of the Palestinian people, blocking their dissolution, which was an objective of the Zionists, colonialists and feudal regimes.

It was precisely this strengthening of the people and their leaders that allowed the PLO to rebuild the unity of the Palestinian people and clearly define their right to self-determination, to proclaim an independent state, and to the return of the refugees following the collapse of the coalition of Egypt and Syria, and the 1967 June defeat. The Palestinian cause re-emerged within the heart of Israeli society, and the PLO re-established its position in the Arab and international spheres as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The setback, therefore, had less impact than many had imagined.

The Palestinian cause is still alive, and the Palestinian people still exist. More than 4 million Palestinians live on Palestine's historic land, alongside 4.7 million Jews in the state of Israel and the colonies of Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. Another 4 million live in neighboring countries.

After 1991, the situation resulting from the disappearance of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp, caused a part of the PLO leadership to accept US initiatives toward a "peace process", in the interests of the United States and Israel. Hawatmeh's book⁵, published in 1998, described in detail the secrets behind this process. This is not the final step in the movement for national liberation, which commands worldwide respect and support. It is a cause that continues to suffer from painful wounds, with half the Palestinian people living in exile and the other

half under occupation, beset by more than 50 years of victimization and aggression against their national identity.

Despite the disparity in the degree of development of a program and regional and international alliances, it remains an open battlefield. After 30 years of resistance, history cannot be rolled back to the pre-1967 period, nor can the 1948 disaster be erased. The battlefield will remain open until a global, just, and equal peace is achieved. Without this, the Middle East will continue to be a site of all kinds of conflict and explosions.

Today the Palestinian authorities must rearm themselves with the people's unity, all the organized forces, and all the political currents within and outside of Palestine under the banner of the PLO and the common national program.

The already lengthy Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, with their continuing successes and setbacks, are so critical that the contradictions between the power bases within the Palestinian National Authority could be sharpened, giving way to new rebellious outbreaks against Israeli occupation.

The US initiative for implementation of the first and second steps of deployment in the Palestinian rural areas openly favored a solution that meets the demands of ex-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It calls for an Israeli withdrawal from 11 to 13% of the areas. This is considered unjust by the original authors, as the Oslo accords called for more than 40%. The United States, despite being a mediator in the negotiations at Wye Plantation⁶ and the principal supervisor of compliance with the accords by the Palestinians, leans toward the Israeli position.

But there can't be any type of negotiation or dialogue while the process of colonization continues in the occupied Palestinian territories. This position enjoys



Territories occupied by Israel during the June 1967 war.



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worldwide support, especially throughout Europe, Japan, China, and Russia.

Washington has resorted to a duplicitous policy in the face of domestic public opinion, the Arab world, and the rest of the globe. It is time to bring pressure to bear against occupation. Only in this way can we contribute to finding a new formula for global peace and stability, based on international law and application of the UN resolutions guaranteeing the right of the Palestinian people to their complete independence. ■

Notes:

¹ 1947: UN Partition Plan for Palestine: General Assembly Resolution 181-IV, a plan to partition Palestine into two states, one Jewish, the other Palestinian; was applied only to the Jewish part.

² A secret agreement signed in 1916 by England, France, and Russia, bearing the name of its principal authors: Britain's Mark Sykes and France's Georges Picot. The accord included appropriation of the areas that had been under the Ottoman Empire and their division among the parties to the agreement. Following the October 1917 Revolution, the plan was publicly exposed.

³ The 1956 Israeli, British, and French tripartite aggression and the 1967 war.

⁴ The first Gulf War was the conflict between Iraq and Iran; the second Gulf War was the attack by the United States and its allies against Iraq in 1991.

⁵ A collection of interviews with Nayer Hawatmeh, secretary-general of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, referring to events concerning the Palestinian cause from negotiations in Madrid to Oslo.

⁶ An Israeli-Palestinian accord, whose name comes from the location in the United States where it was signed. Its content favors the security of Israel and US oversight of its implementation.