



# THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION AND THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC STRUGGLE



When Marx postulated that class struggle is the motive force of history, his analysis was made to be contingent on the need for historical specificity. In the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte he writes: «Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please: they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past.» Hence the nature of a movement in struggle and the identification of the forces in the struggle is a historically conditioned matter.

In Arab society where classes with antagonistic relations do already exist, class struggle as the basis of, or as the motive force of history acquires greater importance. However, as we add the national dimension of our struggle to the picture, we notice that due to the mix of both class and national factors, that the latter occupies a more dominant role in the present stage of our struggle. This should not be interpreted to mean that class struggle is at a stand still, but rather should lead us to the recognition that class struggle would be latent in certain periods either due to the absence of a revolutionizing force that can organize the energies of the masses or simply due to the fact that the primary contradiction that confronts us is essentially national in character. However, as is clear, class struggle exists at least in latent forms due to the unresolved contradiction between capital and labour, between the structures of the productive forces and the structures of the production relations.

Moreover, to correspond our analyses with the specificity of our conditions of struggle, both nationalism and underdevelopment must be accentuated to enable us to pin-point the motive force of our historical process in the present phase of national liberation.

In 1970, our martyred comrade, Ghassan Kanafani, in an interview with Fred Hallyday captured the essence of our struggle as he capsuled it in the following: «We are struggling against underdevelopment...»

In this context, it is imperative that we identify the main features i.e., the essence of Palestinian struggle. To do so we must identify and illustrate the multi-dimensional enemy we face, as we wage our war of national liberation.

In the anti-Zionist struggle prior to 1948, the Palestinian people were struggling from within their homeland against a movement supported by Imperialism. With the establishment of the Zionist state of Israel which caused the dispersal of the Palestinian people the nature of our struggle was complicated. First, the Palestinian people were dispersed in various parts of the Arab world; second, a number of our people remained under direct colonial rule i.e. under Israeli occupation. It became evident that the liberation of Palestine by virtue of the historical conditions imposed on the Palestinian masses would not be an exclusively Palestinian affair.

After the defeat of the June 1967 war, a larger segment of our people were brought under Zionist colonial rule (administration), and an even larger number of people were convinced of the need of

liberation through people's war rather than reliance on classical warfare waged by the petit Bourgeois Arab military regimes. However, from the outset of the exile of the Palestinians, the people at large lived first and foremost in an Arab context par excellence.

As such, politics and political developments among the Palestinian people were essentially microcosms of the larger Arab picture. Even before the colonization of Palestine by Zionism, there already existed a common denominator among the Arab masses. The Arab masses as a dominated and colonized force represented an ensemble vis-a-vis the oppressor, the colonizer. From the turn of the century when the Arab national movement awakened to take its historic right of liberation from the colonizer, there existed the unifying factor of the Arab masses.

Anti-colonialism which was at the root of the modern Arab renaissance (Al-Nahda) formed the basis of the emergence of Arab nationalism. Due to the fact that the colonization of Palestine was simultaneously conducted with the emergence and development of the new Arab renaissance, the Palestine question occupied center stage and continues to do so to the present. Palestine and Arab liberation became synonymous.

Yet as mentioned previously, the Palestinian people lived in Arab conditions, they influenced and were in turn influenced by the general and various developments that took place in the Arab national movement. Moreover, Palestinian struggle under Israeli occupation though existent did not form a

movement capable of stemming Zionist rule. Instead, Palestinian efforts were mostly put at the service of enhancing the Arab national movement. The existence of the Palestinians in all parts of the Arab world indicated that without a proper dialectical linkage between the particularity of the Palestinian movement and the Arab movement on a more general level, that the true proportions of liberation could neither be identified or realized.

Hence, as the struggle for Arab liberation continued and as the social (class) struggle against Arab reaction also developed, it became evident that:

- a) The Palestinian National Liberation movement is Arab in nature.
- b) The National movement is organically linked to a general social (class) struggle.

In the **Tasks of the New Stage**, we defined the particularities and difficulties of this stage of struggle in the following:

«Firstly, ours is a difficult, complex and ruthless struggle. In addition to those general aspects of liberation struggle (wherever imperialism mobilizes all its military, economic and material forces, trying with all its alliances and experiences to keep and forcibly expand its interest), there is the specificity of our own struggle, where Zionist settler-imperialism defends its existence in a life or death battle. Besides this, the nature of imperialism's interests (mainly oil) determine its outlook on the area, i.e., it has resolved to use all of its resources to keep those interests. There is also the fragmentation of the Arab nation and problem of political entities (states) which have been maintaining their independent existence for decades, forming a real barrier to the revolutionary mobilization of the whole Arab nation's potentialities for its battle of destiny.»

Before we identify the changing class composition of the Palestinian people both under occupation and in the neighbouring Arab countries, we must keep in mind that in the national liberation phase of the struggle, the people as a whole form an ensemble, vis-a-vis the oppressor, i.e., the Zionist state of Israel and Imperialism. As such it could be stated that the whole people is struggling against the ruling class of Imperialism. This view incorporates the national struggle in a class context or put differently, places the local national struggle in the international class struggle, hence provides us with the rudimentary class basis of our national liberation struggle.

From here we must proceed to further uncover the organic link between the national and social (class) dimensions of our struggle. However, we must keep in mind that the unifying factor i.e., the national is an answer as to: what are the masses mostly deprived of under colonial and neo-colonial conditions?

From our standpoint, we can identify two factors:

- A) Our masses national identity is continuously negated by Zionism and Imperialism.
- B) In addition and flowing from the above, culturally, Zionism settler colonialism deprives our masses of their free cultural expression.

These two factors taken to their logical conclusion indicate that our masses are denied the right of self-determination. The working class is not permitted its own free development for its development is peripheral to its Israeli counterpart. Moreover the Palestinian bourgeoisie whose capital compared to its Israeli counterpart is quite diminutive, hence again enjoys only peripheral development.

From the above picture, we can deduce what Cabral arrived at after a careful study of Guinea-Bissau's conditions. He wrote: «In the colonial period, it is the colonial state which commands history.»

Objectively speaking, though Palestinian society has very clear class divisions and distinctions, on a purely theoretical abstract level, the totality of Palestinians are in contradiction with the imperialist backed Zionist entity of Israel.

But as history moves forward and our struggle develops, Imperialism and Zionism joined with Arab reaction recognized that to prolong their lifetime they must increase the class divisions within the ranks of our people. Here again Cabral's comments in his «Weapon of Theory» are of important theoretical consideration:

«The objective of the imperialist countries was to prevent the enlargement of the socialist camp, to liberate the reactionary forces in our countries which were being stifled by colonialism and to enable these forces to ally themselves with the international bourgeoisie. The fundamental objective was to create a bourgeoisie where one did not exist, in order specifically to strengthen the imperialist and the capitalist camp.»

In general, we find a bourgeoisie whose national being is denied by virtue of its peripheral relationship to Zionist development hence in theory and out of its specific class interests might desire its own national entity where it would be the sole expropriator of the surplus value created by the proletariat and other none bourgeois classes. On the other hand, this same bourgeoisie would fear a direct alliance with a revolutionary national liberation movement because if victorious, its class interests would be jeopardized.

The above makes it necessary that we establish certain criteria to help us in analyzing the social structure of a given society. Before doing so, we must keep in mind that an organic link between national liberation and social structure is essential. In analyzing Palestinian society, it is important to keep the following in mind:

important to keep the following in mind:

- 1) The position of each group and class must be defined — to what extent and in what way does each group or class depend on the colonial regime?
- 2) What position do they adopt towards the national liberation struggle?
- 3) Study their nationalist capacity.
- 4) In envisaging the future, what is our anticipation of their revolutionary capacity?

With this framework in mind, we suggest the following propositions:

A) The primary contradiction in the national phase of the struggle is between the organized

interests of the international bourgeoisie and their local allies on the one hand, and the majority of the population living in colonial conditions on the other.

B) Hence the «anti-imperialist» nationalist struggle is a mode of expression of the class interest.

As we look at the above, we notice the merging of the national and class dimensions of our struggle when posited in its international context. In addition, it is also obvious that there exists a contradiction between the unity of the «national» and «social» (class) i.e., unity of opposites.

Again let us qualify on a theoretical plane the implications of national liberation and its impact on social structure i.e. class composition.

Firstly, there can be no national liberation unless our productive forces are completely freed from all forms of foreign domination. In addition, it is the productive forces that constitute the motive force of history, hence freedom of the process of their development is an essential requirement or pre-requisite for their proper functioning and development. As national liberation proceeds on its own course of development it demands profound qualitative changes in the process of development of the productive forces. The changes in this process create new conditions for struggle, and the class composition of the masses changes in correspondence to the changes of the process itself.

Under Zionist occupation, our people though initially dispersed, and also by virtue of the new structural and historic forces imposed on them were ushered out of certain underdeveloped capitalist and pre-capitalist social relations and jolted into the rising advanced capitalist relations that were and are an essential part of the foundations and dynamics of Israeli society.

The Palestinian worker and peasant under occupation having been deprived of his old ways and methods of subsistence has begun a process of social transformation that we could roughly equate to proletarianization. This change in the individual Palestinian worker's relationship to the means of production is accompanied by a slower yet inevitable change in his consciousness. Here we must keep in mind Marx's formulations as to the laws of change which he capsuled in the «Third Thesis on Feuerbach»:

«The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men that change circumstances... The coincidences of the changing of circumstances and of human activity can be conceived and rationally understood only as a revolutionizing practice.»

It is from here that we must emphasize the method of «revolutionizing practice» whose goal under Zionist colonization is twofold:

- A. It must explain and in turn unite our masses under occupation in an anti-imperialist framework to resist Zionist colonization.
- B. In addition, it must explain the social (class) basis of the chang-

ing patterns of the productive forces that are affecting the individual's social relations vis-a-vis the means of production.

The basis of the mobilization is the national dimension, yet with the increasing importance of the social (class) dimension, the national dimension itself acquires a class basis.

The end result of the above should be the development of revolutionary consciousness which is the direct result of the interaction of the colonial factor with the social conditions hence social structure.

Within such a delicate predicament, the forces or the new agents of history are in the making. They struggle as we do under occupation to terminate the Zionist occupation, but a closer look will require in addition, a sober class analysis of Jews in the Zionist state Israel so as to, determine which social classes at this stage of the struggle could in fact reject Zionist colonialism, (this will prove to be more difficult than it seems for reasons we are unable to enumerate presently).

Moreover, due to the organic and dialectical link between Palestinian national liberation and on a more general level Arab Liberation, again the unifying factor or the basis of unity is essentially national in character. The national factor is predicated on «anti-Imperialism», hence we must identify which social elements in Arab society constitute the basis of a wide anti-Imperialist front. Due to the general nature or the minimum basis upon which the anti-Imperialist front must come into being, there necessarily exists various levels of interaction. At this stage of our struggle, the most intimate level is the one between the various social movements in the Arab world who are actually engaged in «revolutionizing practice» through revolutionary armed struggle in the Arab Gulf as conducted by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman. Secondly, due to the organic and dialectical interconnection between the movements conducting armed struggle and the other mass movements that address themselves to the needs of the Arab masses at large, here a second and equally important level of relations acquires importance.

Whereas the major aim of Palestinian resistance is the liberation of Palestine, which in itself is an essential part of the basis of Arab unity, the daily struggles of the Arab masses is another basis which is equally important. However, since these struggles go beyond the national dimension of Arab liberation they usher in the social (class) dimension into unity with the national. For example the Lebanese masses of southern Lebanon suffer from Zionist bombardment in addition to the class oppression resulting from existing feudal conditions. The Egyptian workers support the liberation of Palestine but struggle against their immediate enemy on a daily basis i.e., against their oppressive class conditions. The Jordanian masses are in a similar predicament, etc. Hence as the Palestinian struggle is posited in an anti-Imperialist framework and in its proper Arab context, it is then that we could identify the proper merger or unity or the national and social (class) dimensions of Liberation.

However, the relationships do not terminate there, for there also exist some Arab regimes we identify as national petit-bourgeois whose anti-Imperialism is unquestionable, hence they too are an essential component of the anti-Imperialist front. The unity is based on the national dimension, an alliance correct in nature, but the laws governing such an alliance differ from those which govern the relations between the various movements engaged in revolutionary armed struggle.

These historic frontal alliances, as our particular case indicates must be predicated on a commonly accepted political program identifying both the goal that is sought and the method to be employed to attain such a goal. This forms the basic political minimum. Furthermore as is clear by now, the commonly accepted minimum emanates from an elaboration of the national dimension of our struggle, as to the social (class) that factor will be resolved after a long and arduous ideological struggle that could very well continue even after the negation of Zionism is achieved.

In short, under colonial conditions, all sectors of society (with some exceptions like spies, agents, mercenaries, and a sector of the bourgeoisie whose interests are fully dependent on Imperialism and Israel) form a common unit to face the enemy. Hence, though class struggle exists, the primary focus is the national contradiction i.e. the negation of Zionist colonialism. As we approach nearer to this goal the class contradiction will take different forms. Internal class conflict will rise to the surface and will take the form of the contradiction between capital and labor.

The extent to which the internal class contradictions will prevail, of course depends on the degree of success the revolutionary forces obtain in introducing and operationalizing new structures, new socio-economic units capable of replacing the exploitative Zionist-colonialist structures. Moreover will the political leadership pursue the petit bourgeois approach to revolution which in the name of nationalism also nationalizes political participation on the part of the masses? Or will the petit bourgeois leadership in fact commit class suicide, negate the capitalist road of development and postulate socialist revolution? As such as Cabral writes: «This means that in order to truly fulfill the role of the national liberation struggle, the revolutionary petit bourgeoisie must be capable of committing suicide as a class in order to be reborn as revolutionary workers, completely identified with the aspiration of the people to which they belong.»

It is clear that only through the correct identification of the dialectical unity of the national and social (class) dimensions of our struggle can we comprehend the class basis of national liberation capable of also attaining socialist revolution.