



another serious change, best expressed by the ongoing «peace» process, since the Arab states are dealing with the Palestinian cause as if it can be solved by political means, dialogue and negotiations alone under the present balance of forces. This means that the Arab regimes as a bloc have officially relinquished the concept of liberation. In the process of this transformation, the Zionist entity is dealt with as a natural state in the region, rather than a settler-colonial society. Thus, the Arab states' conflict with Israel is no longer about to whom Palestine belongs, but about which borders Israel might accept. As much as various Arab states may justify their position by saying that there will be a just and comprehensive peace, they realize that a just peace is impossible without a change in the balance of forces. There is a distinction between peace and surrender, and what is taking place is an Arab surrender. If any Arab state gets some territorial concessions from Israel, which is unlikely, this will not change the basic nature of the deal being planned. Without addressing the roots of the conflict, any such «peace» agreement between Israel and the Arab states will inevitably be no more than a truce; renewal of the conflict remains a constant possibility, if for no other reason than Israel's expansionist policy.

### Resisting the collapse

That is the new Arab situation with its gloomy outlook and complicated developments. But in spite of this, hope still exists for halting the dangerous slide towards surrender and eliminating the reasons for it, because neither the policy of concessions nor reliance on the US's alleged neutrality can lead to a just and lasting peace. Moreover, while the «peace» process now appears to be advancing, its avoidance of addressing the Palestinian factor may spell its ultimate failure.

It is true that the US efforts have made considerable progress as of now, with the help of the Arab regimes. But it is unlikely that peace can be created without the Palestinian people's sole and legitimate representative, the PLO. If Baker's warning to the Palestinians about their participation in the regional conference was seriously meant, then he should recall the reason for the suspension of his efforts two years ago. These efforts in fact deadlocked on the question of Palestinian representation in the peace process. Conditions may have changed, but the Palestinian people's representative has not. It is still the PLO.

The responsibility for reconstructing the Arab position so that it could counter the US-Israeli schemes, rests on the PLO, as the key player in any peace process, as well on the Arab states,

especially those surrounding occupied Palestine. To reconstruct the Arab position, there must first of all be a principled rejection of the whole US-Israeli concept of a settlement, since this leads to capitulation. In struggling against surrender and for a just peace, it is equally important to concentrate joint efforts on supporting the intifada, enabling its escalation. This is the most effective means of applying pressure aimed to isolate the Israeli occupiers internationally and force them to comply with the UN resolutions relevant to resolving the question of Palestine. If negotiations are to lead to a just and comprehensive peace, they must occur in the framework of a UN-sponsored international conference. There should thereby be international guarantees for total Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories and for fulfillment of the Palestinian people's rights to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital, under the leadership of the PLO. Only continued struggle can hope to force the US and Israel to accept such a just and comprehensive peace.

*Dateline: August 10th*