

The Democratic State and Armed Struggle

By Naim Khader, Palestinian martyr

The Democratic State

I personally believe that the establishment of a democratic state over the entirety of Palestinian soil is the development which will secure to all the residents, Christians, Jews and Muslims, equality of rights and duties. And the democratic state, in the final analysis, is the only lasting, just and acceptable solution which will secure a comprehensive solution of the problem of the Palestinian Arab people and likewise the problem of the Israeli Jews.

Indeed, I am convinced that any solution achieved before the implementation of this strategic objective will remain a temporary and transitional preparation of the way towards the comprehensive democratic solution. There is no doubt that any transitional solution that is not a step along the road towards the establishment of the democratic state clearly constitutes a danger to the progressive and revolutionary elements in the Palestinian revolution, or at least contributes to their containment. This, in turn, entails the weakening of the progressive movement in the region of the Middle East and even in the Arab world as a whole because any such solution fortifies the existence of the Zionist doctrine in Palestine. This doctrine is of its nature an expansionist, imperialist and reactionary enemy doctrine which will not hesitate to strike any progressive movement that will emerge in the region, as it has indeed continually done since its penetration into Palestine, the heart of the Arab world. There will not be peace in the Middle East except through the liquidation of the Zionist doctrine in its present formulation and practice. The democratic solution, namely, the establishment of a democratic state is the only solution that can secure the dismantling of the Zionist movement and the advancement of an acceptable alternative both for the Jews who are currently resident in Palestine and for a just solution for the exiled Palestinian Arab people, as well as for those who live under the occupation.

The democratic state is a revolutionary thesis advocated by all the groups constituting the Palestinian revolution, and specifically by the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. It is a thesis which indicates the steadfastness of the Palestinian revolution and its civilized spirit, its depth of thinking and its strong commitment to the value of the human being. This thesis transcends the Zionist enemy as an enemy that must be fought, in order to reach out to the Israeli Jewish person with whom it is incumbent upon us to live together in brotherhood and peace. This thesis overcomes the idea of war and destruction and killing because it is consistent with the course of history and it looks towards the building and the construction after the war. This thesis indicates that the Palestinians do not fight for the love of war or for revenge, but rather for the liberation of land and men whatever their religion might be, because vengeance is negative and destructive whereas liberation is positive and constructive. We do not fight the Jews because they are

Jews in order to kill them, or expel them, or throw them into the sea. We fight the occupier viciously whatever his religion, race or country of origin might be. We have in the past fought against the occupying Catholic Crusaders and we have fought the occupying Muslim Ottomans and we have fought the occupying Protestant British, and we are currently fighting the Jewish Zionist in his capacity as occupier. We are fighting the occupier and the colonizer, irrespective of the religion to which he happens to subscribe.

The thesis of the democratic state is a humanist revolutionary thesis. Liberation under the conditions of colonialism customarily involves the expulsion of the foreign occupying colonizer and the return of the exiled people to its home and land. Yet, given our understanding of the problem of the Jewish people and given our belief that 'the revolution must entail the liberation of the land and the human person, we therefore submitted the project of a democratic state which affords the opportunity for every human being who currently resides in Palestine, including the foreigner who came to Palestine as invader, an occupier and a colonizer to remain in Palestine and to live with us in peace and to assist us and to be assisted by us in the building of a democratic society which will secure equal rights to all its inhabitants and equal duties by all its inhabitants without any reference to sex, colour or religion. When ~, we submit this project in sincerity, we do not wish to deceive anyone through this project, nor do we submit this project as mere propaganda.

There is no doubt that the state will be a republic and will carry the name of Palestine because this is the historical name that this land has always carried throughout the centuries.

We therefore say the Democratic Republic of Palestine. We avoid the word secular in order that it not be mistakenly understood that we intend to abolish religion. We do not wish to abolish religion but we do say that religion is a personal question relevant to the individual and his belief, and that it is impermissible to establish religion as an element which adds to, or subtracts from, the rights and the ties of any inhabitant. Had we proposed a secular republic of Palestine, we could have effectively been understood in western contexts as defining a state with a specific confessional nature since secularism has itself almost become a religious tradition in the west. And we do not say a multi-religious state because we do not wish to impose religion on anybody, and we obviously do not say an apostate state; we do say a democratic state where religion will remain a personal question and where religious tradition will be respected, but where religion will not play any role relevant to government or national responsibilities determining rights and duties. We do not say a progressive state because a democratic state, of its nature, must be progressive since otherwise its democracy is bound to be false and superficial. True democracy in our view also entails progress. And we do not say a popular state because the word republic in itself contains the concept of participation of the people, the entire people, in government, subject to agreed procedures. And we

do not say a socialist state because the word 'socialism' has been much distorted in our time. How many parties and groups or regimes claim socialism and in reality are completely devoid of socialism? We understand socialism to mean the just distribution of wealth, privilege and responsibilities at all levels, and to mean also the supremacy of principle over power and free popular elections. Is democracy anything else (than socialism thus defined)? We mean true democracy, obviously. I do not believe that a democratic republic will permit the powerful to oppress the weak, the rich to exploit the poor and the minority to determine the destiny of the majority, we believe that socialism will not be assessed on the basis of words and slogans but rather on the basis of action and application. We prefer a democratic state that will apply socialism without carrying the name, over a state which is named socialist but the name is its only share in socialism and social justice. We are therefore content to say: 'The Democratic Republic of Palestine

Armed Struggle

I do not have the least doubt that so long as the Zionist doctrine remains dominant in the minds of the Israeli leaders and dictates their racist, expansionist and oppressive practice, armed struggle will remain the only way for it has no substitute. There is no doubt that those who have lived under Zionism and who have suffered from Zionism throughout long years have reached the same conclusion, even though certain specific conditions could conceivably compel them to avoid the expression of this conclusion publicly, even had they wished to do so because of their desire to remain inside the boundaries of legality imposed upon them by Zionism itself without challenging it by voicing such statements. So long as Zionism continues to govern the minds of the Israeli leadership as well as individual Israelis in this way, the problem insofar as the Palestine Revolution and the patriotic forces are concerned will remain a problem of life and death and not a problem of occupation and withdrawal. I do not say this in order to outbid anyone. This is my conviction. It is consistent with the Palestine National Covenant and the resolutions of the Palestine National Councils. This does not mean that I will not be satisfied except with a military solution that will enable me to dismantle the Zionist doctrine and practice in one single blow and in one single battle. I believe in a protracted war of popular liberation and hard continuous daily struggle. But I similarly believe in stages, and I believe that every step forward which we take as a result of our struggle and our efforts is a step backwards imposed on our enemy, and that every victory which we achieve in reality is naturally a defeat for the enemy. But it is necessary to be on guard in order that the step forward should not lead us into a trap and in order that what we believe to be a defeat inflicted upon the enemy be not turned into a diversion which will permit the enemy to collect its forces to launch an even more vicious attack and achieve a greater victory.

My conviction in the necessity of armed struggle against Zionism is consistent with my strong belief in political struggle. I consider political struggle to be necessary, in fact, to be a fundamental condition with other conditions for victory.

And the armed struggle will lose much of its importance and significance if it is not accompanied by the political struggle. It is here that the supreme importance of the political and diplomatic gains achieved by the Palestine Liberation Organization, especially in the past few years, is rooted. These gains were not achieved, allegations by some notwithstanding, on account of the armed resistance which the Palestine Liberation Organization has undertaken to intensify. There is no doubt that the political struggle which must inevitably accompany military pressure compels a large number of the Jews subject to the Zionist doctrine to review and to develop the conviction that this doctrine constitutes a political and national danger, even physical danger, not only for the Palestinian Arabs but also for the Jews themselves since they are in reality its victims. And there is no doubt that a number of those Jews and Israelis will gradually begin to participate in the struggle alongside the Palestinians. And there is nothing to prevent some of them from participation even in armed struggle against Zionism and the reaction and exploitation and imperialism which it represents. [Are people] not aware that there are a number of Israeli Jews who stand with us in the same trench in our struggle? And that there are some who carry arms with us? What is there to prevent their number increasing? Nothing except the fears of those who do not wish that there emerge on the scene anyone who is more committed and more patriotic than themselves.

The Palestinian people have carried the gun and proclaimed the armed revolution and have not ceased to do so, and have embarked upon the political struggle and will necessarily undertake to intensify it.

There are Jews and Israelis who struggle politically and with complete devotion alongside us, as well as there are those who have carried arms in solidarity with us and those who are prepared to carry arms at the appropriate time. This is a very encouraging phenomenon because the liberation of Palestine and the establishment of the democratic state are a joint responsibility for all the progressive forces in the region.

END