

International peace conference needed

Independent Palestine under UN plan

The outcome of this conference clearly would be an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza, an Israel confined mainly to its pre-1967 borders, superpower security guarantees and some arrangement for a general military step-down adequate to eliminate any serious risk of "preemptive" or other wars. What is aimed at is a really durable peace which would accommodate both the aspirations of the Palestinians for control over their own destiny and Israel's security needs within the context of military de-escalation. De-escalation would require agreements among the great powers over the supply of arms and material for the local manufacture of weapons. The Resolution would probably require cajoling or browbeating the relevant states, including Israel, into accepting those arrangements which would undermine the power and status of their military elites and the commercial or industrial elites tied to them. It also calls for negotiations over the status of East Jerusalem, which Israel has proclaimed "eternally" its own.

European Community's version

On February 23, 1987, the twelve members of the European Economic Community issued a declaration stating that they favored an international conference under United Nations auspices

with the participation of the parties concerned and of any party able to make a direct and positive contribution to the restoration and maintenance of peace [in the Middle East] and to the region's economic and social development. The Twelve believed this conference should provide a suitable framework for the necessary negotiations between the parties directly concerned.

The principles on which the conference should be based are contained, the Declaration says, in the Venice Declaration of June 13, 1980. That Declaration listed two principles, first

the right to existence and to security of all the states in the region, including Israel, and justice for all the peoples, which implies recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

And second,

A just solution must finally be found for the Palestinian problem, which is not simply one of refugees. The Palestinian people, which is conscious of existing as such, must be placed in a position, by an appropriate process defined within the framework of the comprehensive peace settlement, to exercise fully its right to self-determination.

The EEC proposal expressly states that the "Palestine Liberation Organization will have to be associated with the negotiations." It affirms the position that the settlements and modifications of population and of property in the occupied Arab territories are illegal under international law.

Nordic variation

In March 1987 the Nordic countries declared themselves in favor of a conference based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and on the right of the Palestinians to self-determination. The EEC/Nordic conferences, while not as fully accommodating the Palestinian rights, would result in the emergence of some independent Palestinian political entity in most of the Occupied Territories.

From the point of view of acceptable outcomes, all but the US and Israel could accept either the conference called for by 38/58C or the conference the EEC/Nordic countries have in mind. The crucial issues are: (1) Palestinian self-determination, (2) the form of PLO representation and participation in negotiations, and (3) the roles of the US and the Soviet Union in the negotiating process. The governments of the US and Israel are the stumbling blocks to a genuine peace because, for different reasons, neither would now accept any kind of really independent Palestinian entity in the Occupied Territories, and neither wants to see a genuinely demilitarized Israel. As it has been since '67 and before, momentum towards peace is at an impasse mainly because of what is going on in Israel and in Washington.

Roots of the impasse

An increasingly polarized Israeli society is divided into three ideological camps, each with its own image of what Israel is to be.

The first camp would have a Jewish-dominated Israel, a more or less openly apartheid state whose borders included *at least* the presently occupied territories. In one form or another, this option, according to Murad A'si, enjoys the support of over 60 percent of Israel's Jewish electorate, of whom roughly 18 percent want to continue the *status quo*, 19 percent want outright annexation without expulsions, and 20.4 percent want to annex the territories and expel their Palestinian inhabitants. The expulsionist version of this vision is openly espoused by Rabbi Kahane, who has said that he would allow those Palestinians to stay who are prepared to serve as "slaves" to Jews. More "moderate" versions are espoused by Shamir, and Generals Sharon and Eitan.

A second tendency thinks Israel should be a state with separate and unequal development for Jewish and Arab sectors, insuring Jewish domination and a Jewish majority fully enjoying democratic freedoms, which would continue to be extended formally but not effectively to the Arab sector. This is basically the moderate and conservative Labor position represented by Peres. Support for this position, which is coupled with the "Jordanian Option" for the Occupied Territories, has ranged as high as 37 percent and appears to have fallen to about 31 percent within the Jewish electorate.

The third group believes Israel should be a fully democratic state, promoting equal development of its Jewish and Arab sectors, coincident with integrating the Arab sector fully into Israel's political and economic institutions. Israel's borders should reflect some minor adjustments of the '67 Green Line and Israel should scale down its military establishment in a process leading to full integration as one state among others in the Middle East. This is the vision of Israel as basically the state of its citizens and not the state of the Jewish nation whose in-gathering requires *lebensraum*. It is the vision