



BUYER BEWARE US "Peace" Moves in the Middle East

by Ron Jacobs

Recent news items concerning the possibility of outside intervention in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be considered with great caution. Most importantly, any plan that would send US troops to the region should be opposed. There is only one fundamental reason for the United States to do such a thing--so it can have even tighter control in the region. There is no indication from Colin Powell, the White House or the Pentagon that Mr. Powell's upcoming mission will be to insure that Israel ends its occupation of the territories it has illegally occupied since the 1967 war. Nor is there any indication that IDF soldiers and commanders responsible for war crimes in the current invasion will be brought to justice a la the various members of the Serbian forces accused of similar crimes in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. Indeed, according to the right-wing sounding board The Washington Times, the first actions of any US "peacekeeping" troops that are sent to the region would be to neutralize leadership of Palestine dissenting factions [and] prevent inter-Palestinian violence." (4/5/02) What this means in plain English is that the US troops would either take over Israel's current operation to "uproot terror" or, at the least, assist the Israeli army in the operations continuation.

The scenario that seems to be envisioned by the strategists in Washington is similar to that used by any imperial military--when the natives get restless the empire sends in its troops to calm the troubles. Britain did this in India and Africa, the United States did this in its own west when it was chasing indigenous peoples off their lands and

killing those who refused to leave and the United States continues to do this in countries to its south. The motivation for these actions has very little to do with goodwill and very much to do with maintaining access and control over resources and territories considered important to the empire's functioning.

If US troops were to end up in between Israel and the Occupied Territories under the auspices of an Israeli-approved peacekeeping agreement (and that's the only way the US would send troops), the likelihood of a truly independent Palestinian state would be even further away than it is now. Instead, the Palestinians would end up with the worst aspects of the agreements framed in Oslo. In other words, they would be forced to live in Israeli-controlled regions administered by a combination of Palestinian bureaucrats and Israeli edicts. Their freedom of movement would be subject to the whims of the Israeli authorities and the power of the elected Palestinian officials would be limited to everyday matters. If one wants a scenario to compare such a setup to, s/he can take a look at how South Africa administered its bantustans under apartheid or, even closer to home, one can study the governance structure of most of the Indian reservations in the United States. In short, this option offers an illusion of freedom, not an independent nation. Of course, even this limited independence might be preferable to the blatant occupation and accompanying repression that currently exists in the Occupied Territories.

Another aspect to consider is this. If US troops are put in place in Israel

and/or the Territories, the possibility of another staging area for any attack on Iraq would exist. This also means that the possibility of Iraqi attacks on Israel would increase should the US go ahead with its desire to kill Saddam and replace his regime with one more amenable to US designs.

In short, there can be few positive benefits for most Palestinians should the United States send troops to patrol the borders the Territories share with Israel. One certainly understands the symbolic hope that Mr. Powell's trip means to a people that currently have very little hope at all. Without anything substantive, sometimes hope is all that keeps one going. Mr. Powell's trip is just such an event, despite the fact that he has no plans to meet with the elected president of the Palestinian people, Mr. Arafat, choosing instead to meet with what the US is terming "alternative Palestinian leadership." Furthermore, if the intention of the US is to send troops, there is little likelihood that those troops will either bring or maintain peace, nor is there much hope that their mission would include any serious attempt to restrain the Israeli army should the Israeli government decide to re-occupy any regions it might withdraw from. If the United States truly wanted to restrain Israel and create a semblance of hope for a just peace in the region, it would suspend all the aid it currently provides to Israel until that country ended its occupation of the Territories, closed down the settlements, and began serious negotiations with a coalition of Palestinian forces that would lead to an independent sovereign state of Palestine. Of course, this is not the intention of Israel or the United States. Such a peace will only come when enough of the world's people demand it. ★

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