

# A Crucial Factor in Colonial Conflicts: Opposition from Within

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In a colonial conflict, the main protagonists are, on the one hand, the colonial power and, on the other, the colonized population, and, when it exists, the liberation movement of the latter. This was the case in the Algerian liberation war, the struggle of the Vietnamese people, in Angola and in Mozambique. The ability of the national liberation movements to create, by civil and/or military struggles, a favorable relation of forces in relation to the colonial military and administration, determines, in last account, the end of the colonial domination.

However, the victory has never come merely from military successes or the might of civil mobilization of the colonized, and an additional factor has been necessary to make the difference: growing opposition inside the society of the colonizing state. In the Vietnam war, what ultimately made the US withdraw its military and allowed the Vietnamese liberation forces to enter Saigon was the powerful American (and international) peace movement; the end of French colonialism in Algeria was the product of the severe crisis that the colonial war provoked within French society.

Obviously, the growth of anti-war sentiment was the result of the price imposed on the colonial state and society, in terms of casualties, financial cost, growing international criticism and isolation, as well as the self-image of the colonial society itself and its increasing awareness that the continuous war will necessarily deepen its own moral degeneration and political crisis.

Israel is no exception. The withdrawal from Beirut in 1982 and then from almost all Lebanese territory in 1984 was imposed by a massive Israeli peace movement able to gradually gain the support of the majority of public opinion. Additionally, the recognition of the PLO by the Israeli government and the opening of negotiations (1992) to end Israeli occupation was the result of a shift in Israeli public opinion. In both cases, that shift in domestic public opinion was the result of the successful resistance to Israeli occupation by its direct victims, the Palestinians, and its impact on the international arena.

However, the resistance itself, whatever its efficiency, cannot win until its demands are imposed on the government by a substantial part of the colonial society, balancing the illusions spread by the colonial military and administration and by that part of the political establishment that is ready to pay any price to continue the failing military adventure.

This is why it is so important to build a political opposition within the colonial society itself, even though such a movement is initially, and sometimes for a long period of time, isolated from the mainstream, including from much of the democratic part of the society. Sooner or later, public opinion will change as a result of the costs of the occupation. One of the biggest mistakes of a liberation movement is to believe that it can obtain its rights by bringing only an open hand for peace: to convince the enemy, an iron fist is needed not less than, and together with, the open hand.

The role of the anti-colonial activists inside the Israeli society is precisely to show to the public the two options: the price to be paid for war and occupation and the advantages of peace and reconciliation.

A political opposition inside Israel is important also for a second reason: the future of our children. Relation of forces between protagonists does not remain static, and neither do the regional and international contexts. The strong of today may become the weak of tomorrow; the dominant may risk becoming the dominated. This is certainly true in a colonial context. After 130 years of domination, hundred of thousands of Pieds Noirs were obliged to accept the end of their privileges or to leave Algeria and become displaced-people in the Metropole. Most Israelis have nowhere to return, and after the end of their domination they will have to live together with those whom they have oppressed.

The existence of Israelis who have shown in practice their support for the rights of the indigenous Palestinian population may definitely help the gradual building of a co-existence based on equality and mutual respect. They can be the bridge to cross the river of hatred resulting from decades of oppression and humiliation.

While sitting a short period in jail for charges of assistance to Palestinian organizations, I remember the one factor that helped to keep my spirit up was precisely the fact that I knew this was a modest price to pay for the possibility of the Israeli future generation to live in a free, democratic and joint Palestine.

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**P.S.**

\* From Michael Warschawski's bliog:

<http://www.alternativenews.org/michael-warschawski/2070-a-crucial-factor-in-colonial-conflicts-opposition-from-within-.html>