

Ending Apartheid *as Part of Ending All Oppression—* South Africa Is *Not* a “Model”

In message number Five, I pointed to these essential facts:

Apartheid is the white-supremacist system to which the native African people in South Africa were subjected for generations, until the early 1990s. Apartheid is the Jewish-supremacist system which Israel has imposed on the Palestinian people, from the founding of Israel in 1948 until the present time....

The U.S. ruling class *supported the apartheid regime in South Africa for almost the entire time it was the ruling system in South Africa*, and now the U.S. is continuing to support the apartheid state of Israel.

It is also no accident that, during the time when apartheid was the ruling system in South Africa, *Israel was a very close ally of South Africa*. Israel provided military and other aid to the South African apartheid regime in its brutal suppression of the African people in that country. Israeli leaders openly praised the South African apartheid regime, celebrating it as a model for Israel's treatment of the Palestinian people. (If you don't believe this, or you want to know more about it, go to the website *revcom.us* and look at the quiz about Israel, and in particular Part 2 of that quiz: “Israel and Comparisons to Apartheid South Africa.”)

Some well-meaning people have argued that the abolition of apartheid in South Africa can serve as a “model” for how to put an end to the apartheid oppression of the Palestinian people by Israel. But this is an illusion that does not take into account the reasons why apartheid could be ended, in the way it was, in South Africa—*without an actual, thoroughgoing revolution—and why this is not a “model” for ending the oppression of the Palestinian people by Israel*.

The ending of apartheid in South Africa, in the early 1990s, did *not* lead to a fundamental change in the capitalist economic system of that country, and it has *not* brought liberation for the masses of African people from conditions of exploitation and oppression. The key government positions in South Africa are now held by elite African forces—yet the country continues to be marked by *profound inequality*, with the small white minority monopolizing the land and wealth, while the *masses* of African people continue to suffer in conditions of terrible poverty and degradation. And instead of righteous rebellion in opposition to apartheid in past generations, today the situation is marked by big-time criminal gangs preying on the masses of people—and the awful spectacle of African people in South Africa carrying out violent attacks on immigrant workers, brought in from other African countries to be viciously exploited in the mines and other workplaces of the South African economy.

It is very important to understand *why* the current awful situation in South Africa is what it is—*how* the end of apartheid was brought about, and why this did *not* bring real and complete liberation for the masses of people.

For generations there was militant struggle among the masses of people against the apartheid system in South Africa, and this reached a high point through the 1980s. This created a situation where the white minority rulers of the country, and their backers in the U.S. (and other “western” imperialist countries), felt the need to make some kind of change—but one which would *not* do away with the fundamental relations of exploitation in the country or the country's basic position within the framework of U.S.-dominated imperialist relations.

The basic reasons why this change could involve the ending of apartheid in South Africa, *without* a thoroughgoing revolution, are closely related to the reasons why this “South African solution” is *not* a model or means for ending the oppression of the Palestinian people by Israel.

South Africa is important to the U.S. imperialists, particularly in terms of the assertion of U.S. dominance in Africa, but South Africa does not play the same kind of role that Israel does, as a heavily-armed bastion of support for

U.S. imperialism in the strategic region of the “Middle East.” Maintaining Israel as a “western-oriented” state is of decisive importance for the U.S. imperialists, and in turn the Zionist (Jewish supremacist) nature of Israel is of critical importance in maintaining Israel as this bastion of support for U.S. dominance, especially in opposition to the influence of Iran—and beyond that Russia, and increasingly China—in this strategic region.

The situation of South Africa, with the ending of apartheid in the 1990s, was very different. The African National Congress (ANC), the most prominent organization opposing apartheid in South Africa, had been closely connected with the Communist Party of South Africa, which in turn was closely aligned with the Soviet Union. But by 1990 the Soviet Union was coming apart and would soon cease to exist. (The Soviet Union had, since the mid-1950s, no longer been socialist, but it had continued to present itself as a socialist force opposed to imperialism—and, up through the 1980s, it posed a powerful obstacle to U.S. imperialist domination in the world. The Russia that remained, after the Soviet Union no longer existed, in the early 1990s, was then a greatly weakened country, no longer posing a serious challenge to U.S. domination at that time.)

These were the factors that made possible the ending of apartheid in South Africa, and this was the basis on which the ANC leader Nelson Mandela, after decades of incarceration, was finally released from prison, and then allowed to take part in elections, which resulted in his becoming president of the country in the 1990s.

As I have emphasized, while the ending of apartheid in South Africa was important, the *basis* on which it was ended has meant that it has *not* led to real and complete liberation for the masses of African people, and instead the vast majority today continue to suffer terrible conditions of exploitation, poverty, oppression and degradation.

The crucial lesson is that, in order to finally put an end to all this terrible suffering, it is necessary to carry out a thoroughgoing, truly emancipating revolution.

As applied to the situation of the Palestinian people today, the following (from my message number Six) points to critical questions of orientation and approach:

The answer is definitely not to “kill off all the Jews in Israel” or “drive them into the sea.” The answer is the *abolition of the state of Israel*, and in its place *the creation of a revolutionary state in which the government and the laws do not promote any religion and do not favor one people over another, and instead there is equality between Jews and Palestinians.*

The answer is also definitely *not* the “two-state solution” being promoted by the Biden administration. Such a “two-state solution” would really amount to nothing more than a powerful state of Israel continuing to occupy land stolen from the Palestinian people, while the so-called “Palestinian state” created with this “solution” would be a bitter joke—a *puppet* state—merely a patchwork of separated small territories, surrounded and dominated by Israel, with the Palestinian people still subjected to terrible oppression and deprivation.

Once more:

The answer is that the fight against the state of Israel must be waged on a *revolutionary* basis, with the goal of putting an end to *all* oppressive relations and all inequality among people based on race and nationality, sex and gender, and all relations in which one part of society exploits others. And the urgent need is for a revolutionary force to emerge to lead the struggle *on that basis.*

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