them will only be accomplished in the presence of the Syrian forces.» The request for Syrian forces is expressedly for this purpose, because if the Lebanese Forces take up this task they will be faced with difficulty and repercussions.

It is not unusual that *Al Nahar* should talk about «cleaning» West Beirut and the Palestinian camps. However, it is unusual that the newspaper should talk about a well-contrived plan and a complete senario for the operation. There is no doubt that those targeted are armed Palestinian and Lebanese groups which refuse to resolve the Lebanese crises on the basis of cancelling Lebanon as an area for military struggle against the Zionist enemy.

The danger of this plan is not whether it can be carried out. The danger is that there is a prior decision to execute such a plan. This means that if the plan is not implemented now because of local, regional or international factors, it will be implemented when the situation allows.

Initiating the battle of West Beirut and the Palestinian camps a second time will lead to a new situation where the only losers will be the nationalist forces, irrespective of who wins the battle. The only winners will be the Lebanese fascist forces which cooperate with Zionism, accepting the Syrian option only temporarily until they once again see an opportunity to declare their alliance with Zionism and imperialism.●

The Kidnapping of Soviet Diplomats

Since we wrote the article below, 3 Soviet diplomats have been released in West Beirut, a source of great rejoicing for all progressive forces. However, we still find it relevant to comment on the kidnapping, for regardless of their identity or intentions, the kidnappers acted against the interests of Lebanon and its people.

In late September, four Soviet diplomats were kidnapped in West Beirut; one was murdered in cold blood, and there were threats to kill the other three and blow up the Soviet embassy. Allegedly, this was intended to force the Soviet Union to pressure Syria to impose a ceasefire in Tripoli. Though allegedly carried out in defense of the Muslims and Islam, this act, whether intentionally or not, ultimately serves the enemies of Muslims and all Lebanese patriots.

We need not discuss the identity of the kidnappers or their real motives for carrying out this crime, except to say that their hatred of the Soviet Union, based on their religious sentiments, rendered them politically color-blind. Rather we will discuss three basic observations.

First of all, if the kidnappers' main aim was to pressure the Soviet Union to actively seek and achieve a ceasefire in Tripoli, then they had miscalculated matters. Considering the nature of the battle of Tripoli, the Soviet Union did not have the means to achieve an immediate ceasefire. Moreover, the Soviet Union has historically been an ally of the patriotic and Muslim forces in Lebanon. It is thus one of the parties to be negatively affected by the continuation of this battle and its anticipated long-term effects. This is true regardless of any specific considerations which determine the Soviet position on the war in Tripoli. Rather than such fighting, the Soviet Union has a definite interest in the continued unity of all Lebanese forces not tied to 'Israel'.Moreover, the Soviet Union joins with the Lebanese patriotic forces in opposing the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary strategy in Lebanon, for the success of this strategy will transform Lebanon into a hostile base, similar to 'Israel', Turkey, etc.

Nationalist Beirut celebrates the return of the Soviet diplomats

Secondly, the Lebanese conflict is today distinguished by the unusually large number of forces involved. Some have widely varying reasons for their actions and change their practice from one political moment to the next. Under such circumstances, the Soviet Union - even if it had the ability to fulfill the kidnappers' demands - cannot give in to these demands, no matter how much they value the lives of their diplomats. If the Soviet Union were to submit to this case of blackmail, it would bring upon itself a series of such acts. In this respect, its attitude to this sensitive issue does not differ from that of other countries with responsibilities and interests around the world.

Thirdly, the kidnappers hoped that practicing such crimes would create the sort of environment that would encourage other groups to resort to violence to settle old scores, motivated by religious chauvinism. The recent killing of a Lebanese communist, by a group claiming to defend Islam, is another case in point.

As was clear in the communiques issued by various organzations claiming responsibility for the kidnapping, the true motive for choosing Soviet diplomats was religious chauvinism, not objective political contradictions. Such actions further complicate the Lebanese conflict, deepening the sectarian aspect by simplistically dividing the world into faithful Muslims and atheists. Political blindness and failure to see where the interests of Lebanon and Muslims lie, leads these alleged defenders of Islam to carry out such crimes. Such simplistic religious outlooks cloud the picture and overlook basic political realities, leading these forces to resort to hostility against the Soviet Union, without whom they could never mount a serious opposition to imperialism.

This crime should be condemned by all those concerned about Lebanon and its future. It is the duty of every Lebanese and Arab patriot to demand the immediate release of the three remaining Soviet diplomats, and firm punishment for the kidnappers and murderers of their comrade. ●