

Lebanon

No Peace with Fascist Power

Internal fighting among the components of Lebanon's fascist forces has produced a new 'strongman' - Samir Geagea - at least for the moment. More significantly, it has delayed if not scuttled the attempt to find a political solution to the Lebanese crisis.

On December 28th, an accord to end over a decade of civil war was signed in Damascus, by Walid Jumblatt of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), Nabih Berri of the Amal Movement and Lebanese Forces Commander Elie Hobeika. The accord called for liberating all Lebanese territory from Zionist occupation, for peace, security and the establishment of a genuine democratic system by abolishing political sectarianism, restricting presidential powers and drawing up a new constitution and electoral law. The tripartite accord upheld Lebanon's unity and privileged relations with Syria.

Although the signing parties agreed on an extended transition period for abolishing confessionalism, the principles enshrined in the accord were still too much for the majority of the fascist forces. Lebanese Forces chief of staff Samir Geagea linked up with the Phalangists loyal to his former rival, President of Lebanon Amin Gemayel. On January 15th, they staged a bloody coup in the fascist-held areas. At the cost of over 400 lives (Christians whom they claim to protect), the Geagea-Gemayel axis forced Hobeika to resign and leave the country.

Once again, the Lebanese Forces were reorganized, this time under Geagea's leadership and principle: "There is now going to be only one single command for all Christian forces under the Lebanese Forces flag, and any attempt to create any other command will be dealt with swiftly and severely. (*Monday Morning*, January 27-February 2, 1986. All following quotes in this article are from the same source.) The new command claims that the coup was an internal matter, and not directed against relations with Syria. Thus they seek to cover up their continued adherence to the US-Zionist plans to keep Lebanon divided and weak, as long as the nationalist forces have the upper hand. As stated by PSP Politbureau member Akram Shehayeb.

"The sabotage of the accord indicates very solid relations between the regime, Geagea and the US-Israeli axis." On January 22nd, US State Department spokesman Bernard Kalb expressed support for Amin Gemayel after the coup in East Beirut. US Ambassador to Lebanon Bartholomew urged the nationalist forces in the National Unity Front to open negotiations with the new Lebanese Forces leadership. However, the stability of the Geagea-Gemayel axis is itself in question. The car bomb in the East Beirut suburb, Furn al Shebbak, which killed over 30 people, exploded near a Phalangist Party office. Some observers termed it "the beginning of the struggle between the Phalangist Party and Geagea."

The Lebanese Forces have now adopted an insidious political tactic for sabotaging the accord: They claim to be ready for a 'compromise' whereby political sectarianism would be preserved, but presidential powers restricted. Meanwhile, a 'balance' would be maintained between the armed factions, which in reality would allow the fascists to keep the possibility of sabotaging any future peace efforts not to their liking.

Fascist violence

The events of January 15th should not have been a surprise to anyone who follows Lebanese politics closely. Over ten years of civil war have shown that the fascist forces will not willingly give up either their military power or the privileges they hold by virtue of Maronite dominance of the state. There is moreover a long tradition of infighting among the fascists themselves. Geagea himself, on Beshir Gemayel's orders, attacked Suleiman Franjeh's stronghold in North Lebanon in 1978, killing 30 family members and supporters. At the time, both Geagea and Franjeh were grouped in the Lebanese Front. In 1980, Beshir's Phalangists attacked and subordinated the militia of another Lebanese Front leader, Chamoun. In

March 1985, Geagea led a 'revolt' against Amin Gemayel due to the latter's forced cancellation of the May 17th accord with 'Israel', and his relations with Syria. Now Geagea and Amin Gemayel have forged an uneasy alliance against Hobeika's willingness to enter the Syrian-sponsored peace plan for Lebanon.

Zionist-fascist sabotage

Even before the accord was signed, its opponents had made themselves obvious. Israeli overflights of Lebanon, including mock raids on strategic points (Beirut, the mountains and Saida) were daily fare from late November when it became clear that the tripartite talks in Damascus were serious. With the signing of the accord, there was a dramatic escalation of fighting on the frontline separating the nationalist forces of the Saida area and the fascists based in Jezzine, who have close ties to the Israeli occupiers and maintain links to East Beirut as well.

Tension emerged among the East Beirut fascist elite as well, with recurring internal clashes and an attempt on the life of Hobeika's top adviser, Assad Shaftari. Even putting aside questions about Hobeika's sincerity in view of his past record of collaboration with the Zionist enemy (most notably his leading the Sabra-Shatila massacre), there were influential figures who opposed the accord from the start. Notable among them are Amin Gemayel; former President and Lebanese Front leader, Camille Chamoun; and his son Dany, head of the National Liberal Party and historically one of the most enthusiastic about relations with 'Israel'.

The opposition to the accord from the Gemayel and Chamoun clans is not hard to understand. Both have extensive business interests in addition to their political careers. A democratic, just settlement to the Lebanese crisis would restrict the Maronite bourgeoisie's manipulation of political power to their own economic advantage.

From the start, there were grumblings about the accord within the Lebanese Forces themselves. The day after the accord was signed, Geagea told a parade of new military recruits: "Let no one think that peace is made in assembly halls or in the capitals of foreign countries...If we want real peace, we should seek a real balance of power...(and) an effective military force." This line proved fatal to Hobeika's attempts to bring the