

Copenhagen

World Peace Conference

In late October, 2,500 delegates from peace and anti-nuclear groups, progressive parties and countries, solidarity organizations and liberation movements gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark, for the World Peace Congress. This was the biggest non-governmental, international peace conference ever held in a western country. It marked the UN International Year for Peace.

The conference was divided into topic centers. Topic center no. 1 dealt with «Peace and Justice», emphasizing the linkage between these two concepts, and the necessity of eliminating the nuclear threat and the arms race altogether. It was noted that the millions spent on the arms race «could significantly improve the situation of 2/3 of humanity (referring particularly to the developing countries) and solve the problem of famine.»

Topic center no. 2 on disarmament focused on the situation after the Reykjavik summit, noting that the Soviet Union's proposals «have opened new prospects... for the endeavor of the peace movement» and labeling the SDI as «the principal obstacle to reaching a world free of nuclear weapons.»

Topic center no. 3, entitled «Peace and Liberation», focused on the need for eliminating apartheid. Criticism was voiced of «the illegal behavior of the Reagan Administration, Israel and the apartheid regime» and of the US and Britain's «abusive use of the veto» to protect South Africa against sanctions. The conflict in the Western Sahara was raised and deplored as a remaining vestige of colonialism, worsened by the Moroccan regime's illegal occupation. Also touched upon was the «continued occupation by the US army of a part of Korean territory and the use of South Korea as one of the largest nuclear bases in the region.» Also, the nuclear alliance between South Africa and 'Israel' was denounced. Many participants raised the Palestinian issue, stressing that peace in the Middle East is inseparable from restoring the rights of the Palestinian people. There was condemnation of the Israeli army's repression of the civilian population in occupied Palestine and South Lebanon.

There was much condemnation of the aggressive US policy in Latin America, especially the use of «the territory of Panama, El Salvador and Honduras to launch attacks on Nicaragua.» Repression in Pakistan was brought up, as was the necessity of Puerto Rico's independence. Based on the view that «liberation, anti-apartheid, anti-racism, anti-zionism and world peace issues cannot be separated,» this topic center distinguished itself by forwarding concrete proposals. It advocated campaigns for sanctions against South Africa, for the release of all political prisoners there and in Namibia, and for greater support to the ANC, SWAPO, POLISARIO and Nicaragua. It was also suggested that 1987 be proclaimed Palestine Year.

Other topic centers dealt with «Peace and Human Rights», «Peace and Human Needs», «Living for Peace» and «Peace and Trust».

SOLIDARITY WORK WITH PALESTINE

Our correspondent took the opportunity to discuss the state of the solidarity work with the Palestinian people, with various Danish organizations working in the Palestine Campaign. Hanne Christensen, a leading activist, explained: «The Palestine Campaign was formed in 1982, immediately after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Before that, solidarity work was carried out by various organizations... In 1982, all these gathered in the same framework, and new forces entered, including trade unions which had not previously been involved. We were more than 20 organizations. We had a very big demonstration against the Israeli invasion with 15-20,000 people. It was the second biggest anti-imperialist demonstration ever held in Denmark... A lot of ordinary people reacted

very strongly. They were shocked by the invasion. All their ideas about Israel as a democracy, and a way to solve the Jewish problem, were shaken...»

A comrade of the Danish Communist Party added: «When there were attacks on the Sabra-Shatila refugee camps, a group of us went to the US embassy and painted the Palestinian flag on their grass and on Israel's Place (a square in Copenhagen). Every time we made demonstrations, more organizations came to take part. We have changed public opinion a little, but we must do still more.»

Hanne continues, «The activities of the campaign continued to be strong and effective for a year... Then things returned to almost how they had been before 1982... When the bourgeois media does cover the Middle East, they try to confuse people by the way they describe Syria, Jordan, the forces in Lebanon, etc... We are not capable of confronting this kind of misinformation... It doesn't make things easier that the PLO is not united and one doesn't know exactly what the PLO will do. We are confronted with that kind of question every time we try to convince the trade unions to be more active in solidarity with the Palestinians.»

«We try to emphasize the situation in the West Bank and Gaza, where you have a very clear situation - there is the occupation and how it treats the Palestinians... You can take a stand on these things, criticizing Israel and its base. You can develop support to the Palestinian people and their right to exist and have political activities... We have talked about other ways of strengthening the solidarity. One is to connect Israel with South Africa; if people are against apartheid, they should be against Israel too, because it is exactly the same.

Also, Israel is a nuclear power. The peace movement should not accept that nuclear power be used as a form of pressure, and that's how Israel will use it. It is not just that the regional conflict could endanger world peace because the US or Soviet Union will start using atomic weapons, as some say. It is more obvious that Israel will use them first...»

Preben Moller Hansen is the chairman of the Danish Seaman's Union, and leader of Fealles kurs klubben, a militant labor organization that recently formed a new political party which bases its work on Leninism. Referring to their international contacts, Preben noted, «We have friendly relations with the PFLP. This is our best contact in the Middle East. We also have contact with the PLO office here, but we haven't done much with this, because we understand that Mr. Arafat is on a wrong course... We have to support the groups that fight in Lebanon for the interests of the working class, and we have the opinion that the PFLP is doing that.»

Asked about the Israeli-Jordanian policy for joint rule of the occupied West Bank, he replied: «No normal, thinking man, even if he is far away from Palestine, can accept Camp David, for it means a defeat for the working class. On the other hand, King Hussein comes with his plan which nobody can accept. You have only one way and that is to fight for your own country on your own grounds, not on other people's... Otherwise you will be as slaves for 100 years. You must try and get Palestine in your own way.»

Preben concurred with others involved in the Palestine Campaign, that the division in the PLO detracts from the solidarity work with Palestine. He also pointed out that many