

Palestinian National Dialogue

On April 13th, a week of inter-Palestinian dialogue began in Algiers, in preparation for the Palestinian National Council that convened on April 20th. After meeting with PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat for the first time since 1983, PFLP SecretaryGeneral George Habash announced that Fatah had decided to cancel the Amman accord signed by Arafat and Jordan's King Hussein in February 1985. With the removal of this big obstacle to Palestinian national unity, the comprehensive dialogue began.

Participating in the dialogue from the beginning were the PFLP, DFLP, Fatah's Central Committee, Popular Struggle Front (PSF), Arab Liberation Front (ALF), Revolutionary Council (Abu Nidal) and the two branches of the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF), led by Talat Yacoub and Abu Abbas, respectively. While the PSF and Abu Nidal withdrew from the dialogue due to dissatisfaction with the results, the Palestinian communist Party joined in the last days preceding the PNC.

Previous contacts and agreements among Palestinian resistance organizations had laid the basis for the national dialogue, including the Tripoli document (see text in this issue) and the Tunis document agreed on between Fatah's Central Committee, DFLP and PCP. Also contributing to the dialogue were the views of Palestinian independents.

Attending the April 13th meeting between Arafat and Habash were Khalil Al Wazir (Abu Jihad), Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Hani Al Hassan and Hayel Abdul Hamid from Fatah, and comrades Abu Ali Mustafa, Abdul Rahim Mallouh and Omar Quteish from the PFLP. After the meeting, comrade Habash stated: «...brother Yasir Arafat reaffirmed the decision of Fatah's Central Committee to cancel the Amman accord. He also reassured the PFLP delegation that a PLO Executive Committee meeting would be held to issue an official cancellation of that accord prior to the PNC's convening. For the PFLP, «the official cancellation of the Amman accord opens the way for discussing political and organizational issues which the Front considers essential for the restoration of the PLO's unity on a firm basis.»

On April 14th, dialogue continued between the secretary generals of the Palestinian organizations. The different viewpoints concerning relations with Egypt were reviewed. Fatah advocated continuing these relations, while the PFLP made breaking relations with the Camp David regime a precondition for its participation in the PNC. The DFLP called for an intermediate solution to this problem. This disagreement did not, however, change the overwhelmingly optimistic atmosphere among the main resistance organizations.

Dr. Habash indicated that the PFLP had not yet decided finally whether or not to participate in the PNC, saying that this depended on the developments in the dialogue, in particular reaching agreement on relations with the Egyptian regime. Comrade Habash added that the PFLP would «exhaust all efforts to reach an agreement, bearing in mind the tragedy the Palestinian people are experiencing in the occupied territories and in the camps of Lebanon.»

The third day of the dialogue was dedicated to a general discussion of the internal situation in the PLO and relations with the Arab states.

On April 16th, there was a meeting between the delegation of Fatah, headed by Yasir Arafat, and the PFLP delegation, led by comrade Habash. On this day, Hani Al Hassan, Fatah Central Committee member and political advisor to Arafat, created uneasiness among the participants in the dialogue with his speech. Some interpreted it as an attempt to justify continuing relations with Egypt, on the pretext of preventing further tightening of the siege around the PLO. Others considered that Hassan's speech ignored the Egyptian regime's true position on

an international conference in order to conclude that relations with this regime were necessary to make such a conference successful.

Discussions continued between the Palestinian leaders on April 17th. A meeting of the secretary generals of the participating organizations reviewed the proposals made by the committee responsible for formulating communiques, and discussed the issues of disagreement. The discussions focused on an international conference, relations with Egypt and with Syria.

Mohammad Sharif Musa'idiya, the second man in the Algerian leadership, and Ahmad Taleb Al Ibrahim, Algerian foreign minister, began efforts with the Palestinian leaders to resolve the obstacles to convening the PNC. Comrade Ali Salem Al Beedh, secretary general of the Yemeni Socialist Party, also participated in these efforts. As a result, a meeting took place on April 19th between Algerian President Shadli Ben Jadeed and the Palestinian leaders. The Algerian president conveyed his relief about the great political and organizational results that had been achieved.

Comrade Bassam Abu Sharif, PFLP Central Committee member, confirmed that the PFLP had become more optimistic about the prospects for convening the PNC, adding that a solution to the problem of relations with Egypt was very close at hand. He confirmed that Algeria, Democratic Yemen and Libya were playing a positive role in promoting the success of the dialogue.

On April 20th, prior to the convening of the PNC session, comrade Habash held a press conference, explaining the PFLP's decision to participate: «In the light of the meeting that took place with President Shadli, the PFLP decided at 4 p.m. Sunday (April 19th) to participate in the PNC. In view of the PFLP's analysis of the problems that led to the PLO's division over the past three years, we outlined the political and organizational basis whereby unity could be restored... cancelling the Amman accord, stopping relations with the Egyptian government and adhering to political principles and organizational reform, i.e. collective leadership... We still consider this basis necessary for the restoration of the PLO's unity so that it can be an in-