

ticipation in the PLO leadership if changes were made in the resolution.

Still Arafat's tactics of delay continued. This led the PFLP to withdraw from a meeting with the Fatah Central Committee delegation. At that point, the council session entered its most severe dilemma. Palestinian leaders met for several hours without reaching results. Then seven members of Fatah's Central Committee applied pressure by threatening to appear before the council and «expose the lie of independent Palestinian decision-making.» In addition, the Algerian leadership exerted immense efforts to ensure the success of the council on the basis of adherence to the agreements previously reached. Yasir Arafat also received a message from the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, reaffirming the Soviet Union's urgings that the PLO achieve a unified position, and warning that the division of the PLO would be more dangerous than ever this time. Comrade Gorbachev affirmed that without the presence of independent Palestinian representation, the Soviet Union would not attend any international conference on the Middle East.

Finally, after all these efforts, the formula previously agreed on was reaffirmed, and unity was saved. Thus the PNC session was able to conclude by reestablishing Palestinian unity on the basis of a nationalist political and organizational program, which was presented to the council and adopted unanimously.

In the PNC's concluding session, Yasir Arafat announced the reunification of the Palestinian Liberation Front, thanking the Algerian leadership for the efforts it had expended to that end. The reunification was achieved after the work of an arbitration committee composed of Abu Ali Mustafa, Abu Jihad, Yasir Abed Rabbouh and Abdul Rahim Ahmed. It was agreed that Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Abbas) would represent the PLF in the PLO Executive Committee for a limited period, during which time Talat Yacoub would continue in his post as Secretary General of the PLF. The two factions agreed to convene a unification congress for the organization during that limited period.

Press Conference

In a press conference held on May 7th in Damascus, Comrade George Habash answered questions pertaining to the last Palestinian National Council held in Algiers. Following are excerpts from that press conference.

PRESS CONFERENCE WITH COMRADE HABASH

In answer to a question on a possible reconciliation between Yasir Arafat and Syria and the liability of Salvation Front member organizations joining the PLO's leadership, Comrade Habash answered:

«Despite our pride in the success of the PNC, we consider this success inadequate unless it is followed by consolidating relations between the PLO and Syria. This is because Syria is the only frontline country preparing to confront the Zionist enemy by achieving a strategic balance of power which the Syrians are always referring to. The Egyptian regime-not the Egyptian people - has surrendered to the Zionist invasion. Syria, however, declares and practices confrontation of the Zionist danger threatening the Arab nation. The sacrifices of the Syrian people and army made in defence of the Palestinian cause further underscores Syria's national stand. We therefore consider that all efforts must be exerted towards rectifying the relations between the PLO and Syria and towards restoring the natural alliance which existed through the seventies up till the Palestinian resistance leadership's evacuation from Beirut.

No matter how difficult it is, we, in the PFLP, along with the nationalist, progressive and socialist forces, on the Palestinian, Arab and international levels, will continue our efforts to remove the obstacles obstructing the path to the natural situation which should exist between the PLO and Syria.

As for the second part of your question, we in the PFLP, are within the framework of the PLO, which automatically means that we are outside the framework of the Salvation Front. It is natural, however, that contacts with the Salvation Front's member organiza-

tions will continue. Only when these member organizations join the PLO will Palestinian national unity be considered 100% accomplished.»

In another question, Comrade Habash was asked for his evaluation of his meeting with President Hafez Assad and about the essence of the dispute between Syria and the PLO. Comrade Habash answered:

«Ours is a relationship of friendship and respect. This relationship is based on the common political view of opposition to the Zionist danger to the Arab world. We are agreed on the impossibility of accepting this colonialist entity, the impossibility of recognizing it and the necessity of isolating it as a prelude to uprooting the Zionist danger from our region.

The long discussion which took place between President Assad and myself had to do with the PFLP's assessment of the PNC's political and organizational resolutions..... In short I was glad to hear from the president that what had happened in Algiers was considered positive; secondly, that this unification process should be followed by unifying all Palestinian organizations within the PLO.»

«As regards the relationship between the PLO and Syria the president conditioned it on the leadership's practices on the ground, because in the light of prior experiences great importance is attached to political practices which are in accordance with written agreements.. On the whole I can frankly say that I was relieved after our meeting given the complicated situation between the PLO and Syria during the past four years.»

Comrade Habash was then asked about what guarantees there were which would prevent Yasir Arafat from not abiding by the latest PNC resolutions. Comrade Habash:

«Through our representative in the PLO's Executive committee, we would ►