

RELATIONS WITH SYRIA

The different views on this issue converged on the necessity of reconciliation between the PLO and Syria. The Central Council praised the Executive Committee's efforts to this end.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Although there was overall agreement on the PNC resolution on the international conference, discrepancies arose concerning the essence of the tactics to be followed in this period. Some considered that talking about a joint Arab delegation to the conference would not detract from the importance of the PLO's role and participation.

However, the majority of those who spoke out thought that such talk amounted to offering concessions without getting anything in return. Given the absence of a unified Arab position, and the obstacles to the convening of an international conference, the majority did not feel such talk would consolidate the PLO's role, but rather would lay the ground for more concessions once the conference process gets underway.

THE ARAB SUMMIT

The speakers dealt very seriously with the convening of the Arab summit (since held in Amman - editor's note), which follows several important developments: worldwide support to the idea of an international peace conference, the Soviet-US agreement on medium-range nuclear weapons, and the upcoming Gorbachev-Reagan summit. All speakers stressed that the summit should produce Arab solidarity antagonistic to imperialism and Zionism, and a joint Arab position concerning developments in the region, particularly the Palestinian issue.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

Organizational issues were considered to be of great importance to the participants in the discussion, unlike in the past when these have generated little interest. The speakers dealt with Comrade Habash's speech concerning the importance of democratic reform in the PLO institutions and of the Central Council acting on its new tasks as out-

lined in the last PNC session. Most speakers voiced support to these points. This led the council to adopt several directives for the Executive Committee, in cooperation with the PNC President, to start preparing for a PNC to be held in April, after selection of the membership for the 7th PNC's term, as required by the expiration of the 6th PNC's term in April.

The Central Council decided to delay discussing and adopting the internal rules and regulations to govern its own activities, even though this was on the agenda. The delay was due to the Executive Committee's failure to have formed a committee to draft the rules and regulations in advance. As a result, the draft was hastily written, making it impossible for the council members to study it carefully. Nonetheless, the council did elect a temporary secretariat to assist the PNC president until a set of rules and regulations is adopted at the next council meeting. The secretariat will consequently become permanent in accordance with the PNC's resolution.

The final statement was prepared by the drafting committee and presented to the council. It sidestepped major controversial issues. (See text in this issue.)

With that, the council ended its session. On the political level, the council meeting failed to take a strong stand against the violations of the PNC resolutions that have occurred. Thus, it passed up the chance to further strengthen national unity and impose adherence to the adopted resolutions. On the organizational level, on the other hand, the election of a secretariat and presen-

tation of a draft for the internal rules and regulations, are positive steps in the process of democratic reform.

Despite shortcomings, the holding of the council was positive in itself. It shattered the dreams of those hostile forces who, angered by the PLO's reunification, believed that the unity was short-lived. Palestinian national unity has, on the contrary, been preserved, based on the lessons derived from the bitter experience of past division. emphasized in conclusion: First, national unity needs to be further consolidated and this requires strict adherence to PNC resolutions. Violating these resolutions can only harm unity and ultimately enforce the divisive hopes of hostile forces. Second, crystallizing a clear political line as the basis for the PLO's activities, plus comprehensive democratic reform in the PLO's institutions, would safeguard the PLO's role and status. Third, the PLO should carefully address the issues, with a clear sense of priorities, rather than confining itself to general political rhetoric. For example, it is not enough to voice support to an international conference. Close study is required to act on this position meaningfully.

This is not, however, to detract from the achievements made since the PNC's unification session in April. The important thing is to continue such achievements to the point that the PLO is capable of fulfilling the Palestinian people's goals of return to the homeland, self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Comrade Habash Addresses the Council

The speech of Comrade George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP, at the PLO Central Council meeting focused on two major topics. The first was the necessity of enacting radical democratic reform in all the PLO bodies and institutions. The second was how to deal with the most prominent political developments affecting the Palestinian arena, in accordance with the resolutions adopted at the PNC's unifying session in April. Following are excerpts.

The experience of all societies throughout history has shown that democracy and democratic rules in-

fluence the society's ability to provide the foundation for the masses' creativity and energy. Ongoing events ►