

Editorial

JUNE 1967 AND JUNE 1988

Every year June 5th is an occasion for Palestinian and Arab progressives to reevaluate the reasons for the Arab defeat in the 1967 war launched by the Zionist state, which resulted in the occupation of the rest of Palestine. A major lesson drawn by revolutionaries is that classical warfare cannot stand up to Zionist military superiority which is constantly being bolstered by imperialist support. Only a popular liberation war can do so, by mobilizing the full potentials of the masses in a variety of struggle forms.

This year, 21 years after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, this lesson is not being evaluated solely on the basis of timeworn historical evidence. The Palestinian uprising has put a whole new impetus into this discussion. Daily mass struggle, unbroken for over half a year, has created new facts which challenge the Zionist occupation as never before. As noted by Israeli historian Shlomo Avineri in the *New York Times* on February 24th: «In 1967 the Israeli Army needed fewer than five days to gain control over the West Bank and Gaza. In 1987 to 1988 the same army - much stronger - cannot restore order when faced with stone-throwing turbulent youths. A Greater Israel is not more secure but less secure for Israeli Jews.»

On June 7, 1967, Rabin is reported to have queried: «How do we control a million Arabs?» (*International Herald Tribune*, June 10th). Today, as Defense Minister, Rabin is daily confronted with the full implications of his question. His prescribed remedy of systematic killing, beating, detention and deportation has yet to stop the uprising. Instead, new atrocities are daily being added to the Zionists' ugly human rights record: As of mid-June, 275 Palestinians had been murdered by the Zionist forces since the uprising began. Thousands more have been injured. Among the recent casualties was the three-year-old boy who died in Gaza on May 27th, after his home was tear-gassed as Zionist forces tried to quell demonstrations. This was one of 40 deaths due to the Israelis' vicious use of tear gas in closed areas. In the same week, two nine-month-old baby girls suffered eye injuries from rubber bullets shot at the people of Jabalia camp.

Despite all the sacrifices they have already borne, the Palestinian masses of the West Bank and Gaza Strip marked 21 years of occupation with three days of general strike and confrontation of Zionist troops, simultaneously protesting Schultz's fourth shuttle to the Middle East. The Zionist authorities are moreover faced with signs that the uprising is spreading into «Israel» itself. This year's annual May 1st demonstration in Nazareth was dedicated to the uprising. Throughout the month of May, fires raged on forest and pasture land reserved for exclusive Jewish use in the Galilee, burning about 40,000 acres. Five Palestinians from the 1948 occupied land were subsequently arrested on suspicion of arson. In the same period, the United National Leadership of the Uprising had issued a call for «destroying and burning all the enemies' agricultural and industrial resources.» Fires have also occurred in the occupied Golan Heights and the Jerusalem area.

The uprising has created new conditions in the Arab world, which if developed could impact on the overall struggle. The most recent result of the uprising's impact was the position adopted at the Arab summit in Algiers (see article in this issue). Prior to that, it spurred the reconciliation between the PLO and the Syrian leadership. For several years, efforts had been exerted by Palestinian and Arab nationalists and their allies, especially the Soviet Union, to facilitate such a reconciliation. With the beginning of the Palestinian uprising, contacts increased between the two sides, knowing that the uprising marked a turning point in the Palestinian and Arab struggle. After years of the Zionist state and its backer, the USA, being on the offensive, the uprising opened the horizon for a counteroffensive.

On this background, the martyrdom of Abu Jihad presented the opportunity. A high-ranking Fatah delegation came to Damascus for the funeral, and held talks with the Syrian leadership. The subsequent visit of PLO Chairman and Fatah leader, Yasir Arafat, and his April 25th meeting with Syrian President Assad, made the reconciliation a reality. Differences do remain (see Press Conference in this issue). However, the two sides agreed on three basics: (1) confronting the US plans, primarily the Schultz plan; (2) supporting the Palestinian uprising; and (3) a joint position on a fully empowered international conference under UN auspices with the participation of the five permanent members of the Security Council and of the PLO on an equal and independent footing, with the aim of fulfilling Palestinian rights to return, self-determination and an independent state.

By holding to these points and working to resolve differences, PLO-Syrian relations can be developed into the axis for other tasks. One of these is the return of all Palestinian organizations to the PLO. Another is restoration of the Palestinian-Lebanese nationalist-Syrian alliance that was previously on the forefront of the struggle against the US-Zionist plans. This in turn could pave the way for reorganizing the alliance between the Arab nationalist regimes. It would also enhance coordination with international allies in the efforts to convene a genuine international conference.

The Palestinians under occupation have shown the way to reversing the 1967 defeat and subsequent decline in the Arab position. The Arab nationalist and progressive forces should seize this historic chance. The Arab national liberation movement is called upon not only to support the uprising in Palestine, but to mobilize the masses in each country, to reverse the capitulationist trend that has pervaded the area. Today we stand at the threshold of a new phase begun by the restoration of the PLO's unity, crystallized by the uprising and furthered by the PLO-Syrian reconciliation and the Algiers summit. All nationalist and progressive Palestinian and Arab forces are called upon to struggle for enforcing radical change in the balance of forces in the area. This is the prerequisite for fulfilling the Palestinian people's rights, and simultaneously bringing democracy and progress to the Arab masses.