

The Algiers Summit

Under the impact of the Palestinian uprising, twenty Arab leaders convened in Algiers on June 7-9th, for the best attended Arab summit in many years. Although differences between the nationalist and reactionary regimes were certainly not erased, a spirit of Arab solidarity prevailed. The resolutions adopted in Algiers put a brake on the decline in official Arab policy, and restored a number of positions favorable to the PLO and the Palestinian cause.

It is not without significance that the summit was finally convened in Algiers. Independent Algeria has a long history of support to the Palestinian revolution. The Algerian leadership has always proved itself an honest ally, considering that Algeria's own independence remains incomplete until the independence of Palestine is achieved. The Palestinian National Council has convened a number of times in Algiers, without any interference or attempt to impose political tutelage. Most recently, the PLO restored its unity there in April 1987 - creating one of the prerequisites for the ignition of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories in December of the same year.

In fact, the original proposal for an extraordinary summit devoted exclusively to the Palestinian uprising came from Algerian President Shadli Ben Jedid in February. The Algerian leadership worked to have the summit convened in early April, to provide Arab support to the uprising, and to precede the schedule set by US Secretary of State Schultz's plan for a truncated international conference in mid-April, to abort the uprising. By early March, a majority of Arab states had agreed to attend. Further preparations were made by the seven-state committee formed at the Arab foreign ministers' meeting in January. This committee visited all Arab capitals in the second half of March, to further support for the uprising. It visited the capitals of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, concerning the possibility of UN forces moving to protect the Palestinian people in the occupied territories from the fascist Israeli repression, and pressuring 'Israel' to abide by international conventions on human rights. The seven-state delegation was warmly received in

Moscow and Peking. There were some points of agreement with the French government, but in London and Washington D.C., the delegation met rejection of the idea of a fully empowered international conference with PLO participation on an equal footing.

Meanwhile, the Arab reactionary regimes were busy putting obstacles in the way of the summit, citing a variety of reservations and conditions. The pro-US Arab kings, especially Hussein of Jordan, Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Hassan II of Morocco, were wagering on the end of the uprising. In this, their position paralleled that of US imperialism which wanted to give the Israelis more time to beat down the uprising, and simultaneously hinder the Arab summit from providing support to the Palestinians. This would clear the way for implementing the Schultz plan which had not been rejected by the reactionary Arab rulers.

Yet the uprising continued; this fact, combined with the Algerian leadership's insistence, finally led to the convention of the summit. Due to the delay imposed by the reactionary regimes' attempted sabotage, the Algiers summit was held under the shadow of Schultz's fourth Middle East shuttle, where he reiterated the US stand against a Palestinian state and a fully empowered international conference. However, the vitality of the Palestinian uprising and its impact proved to be stronger in the ensuing inter-Arab contest.

TWO OPPOSITE POLES: SCHULTZ VS. THE UPRISING

Officially, the summit began in the evening of June 7th, but it actually started earlier. Many questions scheduled on the agenda were decided beforehand. The PLO compiled a paper which included its stance on all the

proposed subjects, and sought broad Arab support for this. On the opposite side, America's Arabs, first and foremost the Saudi and Jordanian monarchs, were waging their war against the Palestinian cause on the pretext of containing «extremism.» These heads-of-state did their best to avoid explicit rejection of the Schultz plan in the summit's final statement. King Fahd even put this as a condition for his participation in the summit, having previously planned to visit Cairo on June 7th, the date of the summit's convention. It took a meeting with the presidents of Algeria and Tunis, to convince the monarch to attend the summit in Algiers. It seems that King Fahd, who considers himself the guardian of the two holy places (Mecca and Al Medina), had forgotten the existence of the third holy place in Jerusalem under the abominable Zionist occupation.

Thus, the conflict escalated between the two opposing poles: that of the uprising and that of the Schultz plan. The first round of this conflict was settled when President Ben Jedid opened the summit. His speech was a clear support to the Palestinian position, reiterating commitment to the PLO, Palestinian statehood and a fully empowered international conference with PLO participation on an equal footing. President Ben Jadid set the tone for the summit's deliberations by asserting *inter alia*: «The Palestinian people's uprising is a decisive historical turning point...a radical development in the methods of the resistance which has been going on for more than half a century... (the) repercussions on the political scene make us face a new situation requiring an approach basically different from the one the region has witnessed in the past... A common Arab action must be under-►