



the intifada.



influence in both the White House and the US Congress. Zionist organizations not only control a substantial number of Jewish votes, but are also capable of targeting anyone who opposes pro-Israeli policy. The influence of the Zionist lobby was apparent in the resolutions passed this spring by both houses of Congress, recognizing occupied Jerusalem as Israel's capital, even though this contradicts with stated US policy. Clearly, the pro-Israel lobby also played a role in the US decision to suspend the dialogue with the PLO, having exerted efforts to this end since it started in December 1988.

### The PLO's responsibility

Reviewing the course of the dialogue also reveals that the PLO's activities over the past 18 months fell short of meeting the challenge posed by talks with the US. It was the US that determined the direction, pace and content of the meetings. The underlying reason for the PLO's failure to control the dialogue was the fallacious political approach adopted by sectors of the Palestinian leadership, with the hope of achieving a Palestinian state.

The intifada increased the PLO's stature markedly, giving it more weight on the Arab and international arenas. However, the PLO failed to make full use of the new situation. Some in the PLO imagined that by showing readiness to deal with the US and Israeli initiatives, they could make gains, disregarding the contents and intentions of these initiatives. These forces in the PLO were in a hurry to reap political benefits from the achievements of the intifada, claiming that it would soon be too late and justifying concessions with the idea that a Palestinian state was within reach. They hastened to give concession after concession, without getting anything in return, and ignoring the real balance of forces and whether or not conditions were ripe for fulfilling Palestinian rights at this time. The result was a weakening of the PLO's position in the Tunis meetings, giving the US a golden opportu-

ity to use the dialogue to its ends. The PLO thus shifted from an offensive to a defensive position in the political-diplomatic struggle, which made it easier for the US administration to avoid substantive issues in the dialogue. This also made it easier for the US to continue to exert pressure on the PLO via the Egyptian regime, attempting to extract more concessions and constantly raising secondary issues to divert from discussion of the fundamental issue: the continuation of Israeli aggression and occupation.

The PLO was unable to steer the discussion or even raise the points it found essential; in the end it lost the cards it had brought into the dialogue as a result of its policy of concessions. Thus, when the US realized that the PLO had nothing more to give, it stopped the dialogue, preferring to continue its war on the PLO by other means.

In spite of this, the suspension of the dialogue inflicted no essential losses on the Palestinian people, for it was never an end in itself. The Palestinians refuse such a dialogue if it is only a vehicle for blackmailing the PLO. The Palestinian people were supportive of a dialogue that would serve as a framework for discussing fundamental issues which the US insists on ignoring.

The lesson to be drawn from the experience of this dialogue is that the path of concessions is endless once embarked upon. The US and Israel will not be defeated in the political battle, or any other battle, unless the PLO adheres to the principles of the Palestinian struggle, as set out in the PNC's decisions. Forcing the US and Israel to change their position remains a major aim of Palestinian political moves; but this can only happen by escalating the intifada and bolstering it with armed struggle, until the enemy camp is forced to recognize Palestinian rights. The Palestinian people and their sole, legitimate representative, the PLO, remain key players in the Middle East, and no peace can be achieved without addressing their rights. ●

## American Public Opinion

On July 9th, the *New York Times* published the results of a poll it conducted in conjunction with CBS television network. In answering the question: «Should the US be more sympathetic to the concerns of Palestinians?» 38 percent answered yes, while 37 percent answered no. The significance of this poll is the different

results for the same question taken a year ago, in which only 26 percent answered yes, while 49 percent answered no. However, decisions taken by the US Congress and administration continue to be more closely aligned to the pro-Israel lobby than to American public opinion.