

and member of Chamoun's National Liberal Party, assumed command of the South Lebanon Army. He was once chief-of-staff for military intelligence and has served in all areas of Lebanon in the course of his career. He «retired» at the early age of 54, while serving as the Lebanese Army's commander in the Shouf last year. He is thus representative of those fascists who moved south in the regrouping that followed the nationalist victory.

Lahd claims to be acting within the realm of Lebanese legality. The failure of the Amin Gemayel government to refute this proves that the Phalangist authority

has in fact relinquished the South to the Israeli occupiers. At the end of March, Amal leader Nabih Berri challenged the regime to state its position. Berri pointed out that it is not enough to abrogate the May 17th accord when it is actually being implemented on the ground through the South Lebanon Army. He also indicated that Lahd has commercial interests in the South which he will certainly use his new position to exploit. Berri called on southerners to confront this army for what it is: an instrument of 'Israel'. By mid-March, the Lebanese National Resistance Front had made seven attacks on these forces. ●

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## South Lebanon

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### The Confrontation Escalates

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*Due to the nature of the conflict between the Zionist occupiers and the masses of the South, a small village can become the focal point and symbol of the overall confrontation. Such has been the case with Jibsheet, southwest of Nabatiyeh, in the recent period. The events in this village were one of the catalysts of the anti-occupation protests which swept the South as the month of March turned into April.*

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The story of Jibsheet dates back to February 16th, when the village sheikh, Ragheb Harb, an outspoken critic of the occupation, was shot by «unidentified» men at his home. Southerners were sure that the Israelis were behind the murder. This was confirmed in late March, when Amal captured two of the killers (members of the Israeli-sponsored National Guard militias) in Beirut, where they had been sent to assassinate Amal officials. One of the captives revealed that the order to assassinate Sheikh Harb had been given by the Israeli military governor in Nabatiyeh, and that he had been paid 10,000 Lebanese pounds (US \$ 1,800) for his part in the killing, while others of his gang had surrounded Jibsheet, firing at anyone who tried to leave.

Then, on March 28th, an Israeli armored column pushed its way into Jib-

sheet. One unit occupied the religious meeting place, while another headed for the home of the new prayer leader, Sheikh Abdelkarem Obeid. Fearing for their new sheikh, the people gathered in the square and began to throw stones at the invaders. The Israelis opened fire, hitting about 20 people, some of whom died instantly, while others bled to death because the occupation troops prevented the entrance of ambulances. At the same time, roads leading to the village were strafed from helicopters to prevent anyone from leaving or entering. Reporters were kept out of the area for several days. Later it was known that six villagers had died, while 12 others sustained serious injury. The Israelis also arrested about 500 villagers, including the sheikh. According to the International Red Cross, 225 of these are now in Ansar.

Lebanese fascists of the South Lebanon Army accompanied the Israeli troops besieging Jibsheet. Israeli media reported only three deaths and attributed these to the fascists, giving the whole incident the character of a mini-Sabra-Shatila. Reports from the neighboring villages at the time confirm that it was a planned operation with the village having been encircled by the IDF from the preceding night.

On the same day, the Israeli army closed the Batar-Jezzine mountain road, the South's only passage to the rest of Lebanon, after the February battles blocked the coastal highway. They cut telephone and telex lines as well, and imposed curfews in several areas. The occupiers claimed the closure was for the purpose of clearing a mine field where four Israeli soldiers had been wounded. Yet the cut-off continued with only intermittent let-ups, fueling suspicion that this is the Israelis' punitive response to the abrogation of the May 17th agreement, and that they will isolate the South until their fascist proxies can take over «security».

Nabatiyeh, Saida and later Sour went on strike, protesting the Jibsheet massacre and the isolation of the South. Rallies occurred in many places with people burning tires and building barricades to keep out the occupiers' convoys. At Shahabiyeh, this led to a clash when Israeli troops opened fire on children piling stones. Villagers, armed with makeshift clubs converged on the Israeli convoy, which was held up for two hours until UNIFIL intervened to diffuse the situation.

Continuing arrest campaigns and earlier killings had precipitated the masses' rage: In early March, two Lebanese died of injuries sustained when the Israelis had opened fire on a demonstration in Maarakah, on February 24th. On March 6th, a youth was killed in Kanaa, when the occupiers fired on a crowd protesting the arrest of village residents. Two days later, a woman and four children were wounded when the Israelis opened fire on a busy street in Saida, after an attack on their forces. Saida's