

Karami's government marks official defeat of the enemy project to turn Lebanon into a US-Zionist protectorate through the presidency of Amin Gemeyel.

It remains uncertain whether the government formed in early May can provide any solutions to the Lebanese crisis. Yet the composition of the cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Rasheed Karami, sets a significant precedent. For once we see a Lebanese government which is not merely the product of backstage wrangling to find seemingly neutral figures acceptable to the various traditionalist factions. Rather, the leadership of the two opposing sides, progressive nationalist and fascist, are sitting face-to-face in the cabinet. The contradictions which constantly erupt in the battlefield are now directly raised at the highest official level. This government cannot adopt a *laissez faire* policy on important national issues, as has been common practice. Nor can President Amin Gemayel unilaterally exercise power on behalf of the Phalangist Party.

The composition of Karami's cabinet does not directly challenge the rules of political confessionalism. Yet it makes a big dent in the purpose of this system which, through divide and rule, aims to: (1) preserve real power in the hands of the big bourgeoisie; and (2) keep Lebanon from taking its part in the Arab national battle against Zionism and imperialism. Now for the first time a cabinet includes ministers who represent the gains of the nationalist forces in the battlefield. Moslem traditionalists known for collusion with the fascist Lebanese Front are absent. Instead we find Walid Jumblatt and Nabih Berri, leaders of the nationalist forces who defeated the fascists and their army in the mountains and West Beirut, and forced the US Marines to withdraw. Berri's presence in particular sets a precedent in class and political terms. Representing the Shiite community and the Amal movement, he speaks for Leba-

non's poor and dispossessed who have always lacked representation in official bodies. He represents the southern patriots whose heroic resistance to the Zionist occupation catalyzed the reversal of the enemy plans for Lebanon.

Most important, Jumblatt and Berri's presence in the cabinet is not a formality, but a necessity dictated by the balance of power that resulted from the nationalist victories in the battlefield. Formation of the cabinet hinged on fulfilling Jumblatt and Berri's demands that they not be used as figureheads with insignificant portfolios. Rather Berri demanded the creation of ministries for South Lebanon and for reconstruction of war damaged areas, issues which are closely linked to the masses' political and social needs and aspirations. The creation of these portfolios and their being assigned to Berri gave added weight to Karami's statements that liberating the South is a top priority.

Two years after-Zionist invasion aims reversed

These same considerations make Karami's government anathema to the Zionists. Abrogation of the May 17th treaty, a step that was forced upon President Gemayel, is now followed up by a cabinet which bestows official legitimacy on the Lebanese National Resistance Front's anti-occupation struggle. Two years after the Zionist invasion of Lebanon, the formation of this cabinet is the final proof that this military venture has totally backfired in the faces of its planners. The Israelis have lost the last shred of official Lebanese cover for their occupation and designs on Lebanon. Karami has determined that the Israeli liaison office in Dbayah be closed, while Lebanon has severed diplomatic rela-

tions with El Salvador and Costa Rica for having moved their embassies to Jerusalem; relations were restored with Libya, all in line with Lebanon's Arab alignment. The capture of three Israelis in North Lebanon by the Lebanese Army in late April, and their being turned over to the Syrian forces, was an early warning that Zionist agents are no longer free to roam the country. 'Israel' invaded Lebanon to transform the fascist minority into the rulers of Lebanon, but today this minority cannot employ state power to help their Zionist benefactors.

Having failed to redraw the political map in Lebanon, the Israelis are back to square one, as is the Reagan administration's policy in Lebanon, and the Phalangists' dreams of hegemony. The Israelis have resorted to scare tactics, aggression and pressure. The day Berri and Jumblatt joined the cabinet, Israeli gunboats prowled in the sea off North Lebanon's coast, dropping mines. The day the cabinet decided on its first meeting, Israeli warplanes were staging mock raids over occupied Saida. In late May, they bombed the Beqaa Valley twice in five days. Then, aided by their fascist cohorts, the Israelis began punishing the Lebanese economy and people by blocking the delivery of fuel to the electric plant in Jiyeh, just north of the occupation lines. This plant generates almost half of Lebanon's total electric power and supplies West Beirut and parts of the mountains. From early June, rationing was imposed. Then the situation was drastically worsened when Israeli bulldozers rammed into the Zahrani-Jiyeh fuel pipeline, causing heavy damage.

US: No-confidence

Confronted with the anti-American sentiment generated by Reagan's policy