

Editorial

Aden-Algiers agreement draws overwhelming popular support but still faces obstacles

All nationalist and progressive forces must be alert to the forewarnings of a new enemy offensive in the area. Right now US imperialism is using the minesweeping operation in the Gulf of Suez and Red Sea to increase its military presence in this strategic area. The results of the Israeli elections could herald a new Zionist onslaught. Already the Zionist occupiers and their fascist allies are stepping up provocations to sabotage the Lebanese government's security plan.

The most prominent gap in the regional alliance needed to confront the enemy's plans lies in the unresolved crisis of the PLO. In this context one can grasp the full importance of the agreement reached in Aden on June 27th, between the Democratic Alliance and Fatah's Central Committee, on a platform for reuniting the PLO. The agreement has since been ratified by the respective leaderships of the five signing organizations and ratified in Algiers on July 13th. This provides concrete evidence that by reaffirming the national line, the Palestinian revolution can reunite and reactivate its pivotal role in the Syrian-Lebanese nationalist-Palestinian triangle of steadfastness.

Despite this breakthrough, obstacles remain for the comprehensive national dialogue which should lay the basis for convening the PNC. The Democratic Alliance has had no leeway to sit back in satisfaction, but has engaged in a continuing political struggle to protect the agreement, expand it to encompass all Palestinian national forces and insure its implementation.

Response to the Aden-Algiers agreement served as a yardstick for gaging who is truly concerned with restoring Palestinian national unity on an anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist line. Our masses' response was immediate, enthusiastic, even jubilant, as can be seen in the sample of statements in the following pages. There was also positive response from the forces of the Arab national liberation movement and progressive forces internationally. The Soviet Union published its support in a special statement carried by Novosti. On the Palestinian level, the negative reaction came from two opposite poles: the hard-core rightists and the National Alliance. The first was expected, for the Aden-Algiers agreement condemns deviation and provides measures to inhibit it. The reaction of the National Alliance must be viewed differently, for failure to draw these organizations into the comprehensive national dialogue will detract from the struggle against rightist deviation.

Rightist sabotage

While respected national figures in the Fatah and PLO leadership, such as Farouq Qaddumi, termed the agreement «historic», Arafat and his immediate circle spoke out in direct contradiction of the basis for unity. Once again, they displayed their readiness to sacrifice Palestinian unity on the altar of keeping channels open to Arab reaction, which also is displeased with the new agreement. On July 17th, while visiting Amman, Arafat asserted his intention to revisit Cairo in the future, claiming that relations with Mubarak's regime are based on its having distanced itself from Camp David, thus negating the call for the regime to abandon Camp David as specified by the last PNC. Arafat also declared that relations with Jordan

have gone beyond cooperation to become joint work, challenging the conditions set by the PNC for these relations. In the same week, he was seconded by Hani Hassan who was quoted by *Jordan Times*, July 23rd, as speaking of a joint political program between Jordan and the PLO, and joint efforts to establish a confederal relationship, without qualifying that this should be between two independent states as decided by the PNC. These are only two examples of the right's verbal sabotage.

The Democratic Alliance was thus called upon to defend the Aden-Algiers agreement: In a series of communiques the Democratic Alliance pointed out that such statements not only violate the new agreement but also the decisions of the PNC's 16th session. Since those making these statements are members of Fatah's Central Committee, which signed the agreement, the Democratic Alliance called on them to honor their signatures and deal with instances of non-compliance. Fatah's Central Committee responded by declaring commitment to the letter and spirit of the agreement and took steps to promote support for it, especially on the mass level. Arafat himself publicly declared his commitment to the agreement. If this commitment is honored, it is a very positive development which will aid the efforts to restore unity on a nationalist basis.

The National Alliance

The Democratic Alliance also had to defend the Aden-Algiers agreement from the National Alliance's contention that it was a retreat and regression. The National Alliance still insists on Arafat's resignation as a precondition for dialogue with Fatah's Central Committee, or participating in the PLO framework at all. In contrast, the Democratic Alliance found this approach unrealistic, and determined to continue the struggle for Arafat's replacement through the democratic process in the PLO's legitimate bodies. The Aden-Algiers agreement provides for Arafat being called to account for his visit to Cairo, and the organizational points give unprecedented guarantees for collective leadership and stopping deviation. It is thus unfortunate that no agreement has been reached with the National Alliance, for its organizations could be an asset in implementing these provisions. We have earlier criticized the National Alliance's incorrect approach and methods for fighting the right in the Palestinian revolution. Today this approach persists in blocking the comprehensive national dialogue which is sorely needed to restore unity on a correct political basis. Objectively speaking this gives the right an excuse for their own reluctance to implement the Aden-Algiers agreement.

Meeting the challenge

The Democratic Alliance has made implementation of the Aden-Algiers agreement a primary duty. Certainly its terms are open to proposals for improvement in the course of comprehensive national dialogue and the PNC. Yet this requires that all national forces make serious efforts to promote the unity process on a correct political basis.

Based on concern for reviving the PLO's role, the Aden-Algiers agreement proposed that the PNC be convened by September 15th. Yet to date the prerequisite comprehensive