

What Zionist National Unity Means

The de facto annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip is not being moderated by the Israeli national unity government. On the contrary, the new government is trying to capitalize on the results of seventeen years of occupation and especially the iron fist policy unabashedly applied by the previous Likud government. In this the Labor Party's role is providing the linkage between the iron fist and US plans for the region.

Israeli Defense Minister Rabin has announced plans for «improving the quality of life of the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.» He has also promised to replace the Israeli military officers appointed to run Palestinian municipalities with Arab appointees. Prime Minister Peres has hinted at easing political and economic restrictions, and announced a series of decisions: Nablus businessmen will be permitted to establish a bank dealing with Jordanian currency (something forbidden since the 1967 occupation); Al Najah University is to be opened before the expiration of the four months stipulated by the closure order; \$5000 rather than \$3000 can be brought in by those entering the West Bank from Jordan; licensing a cement factory and a hospital; reducing censorship.

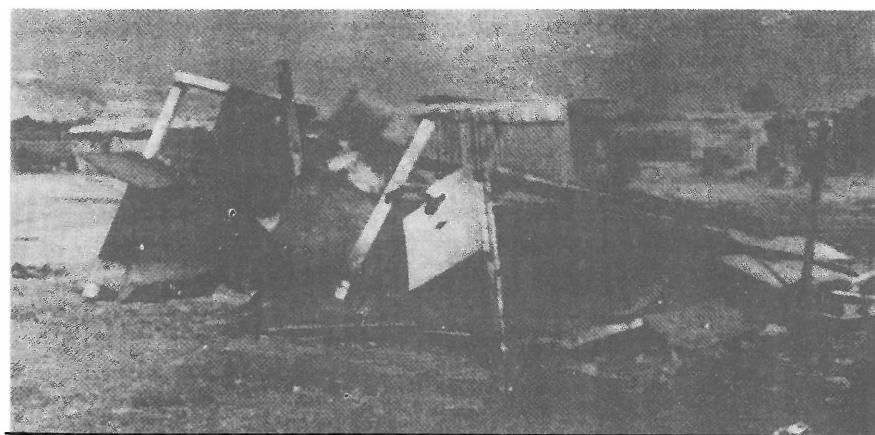
There is indeed reason to be sceptical of these 'goodwill' gestures. First of all, they are no more than gestures and will not actually improve the lot of the mass of West Bank and Gaza residents. The structural damage wrought on the Palestinian economy by occupation is too great to be reversed by a few projects. As an example, the bank will be supervised by the Bank of Israel. As such it will not be independent. Moreover, it will provide a new venue for Israeli monitoring of Palestinian economic transactions and further subordination of the West Bank's economy

to that of the Zionist state. Similarly, appointing Palestinians to head municipalities is just another attempt to cover the fact that the Israeli occupiers have fired the elected mayors, as well as a sleazy trick to lure collaborators willing to rule over fellow Palestinians.

Dollars for imperialist 'peace'

More important, these measures are linked to US plans to resolve the issue of the 1967 occupied territories and the Arab-Israeli conflict generally to imperialist-Zionist advantage. The statements of Labor figures in the national unity government coincide with US Secretary of State Schultz's call for «improvement in the living conditions» of the population of the occupied territories. They also coincide with the invitation of five Palestinian professors from West Bank universities to participate in a New York conference in October entitled: Middle East Peace and Development. This was sponsored by a group of US businessmen, mainly of Jewish and Arab origin, including Najib Halibi, father-in-law of Jordan's King Hussein. Peres himself had met with representatives of this group when he visited the US in September. According to *Al Fajr*, October 26th edition, there are reports

The reality of Zionist «development»: On November 1st, the Israeli military authorities demolished 33 shacks inhabited by Palestinian migrant farmers in the Jiftlik area of the Jordan Valley.



that 'Israel', Egypt and the US have secretly approved the group's plans for investing in projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These US businessmen have been deliberating such ventures for over a year but were earlier discouraged by then Prime Minister Shamir. Labor's entry into the Zionist government provides the chance for hitching this 'private' initiative up to the US-Israeli plans. Jerusalem newspaper, *Al Talia*, had the following comment in its October 11th edition:

«This proposed investment belies American claims that the Reagan plan will restore the occupied territories to Arab control. It is legal recognition of Israeli authority over the West Bank and Gaza Strip through the permission which these authorities will grant for investment. (This) means that the future of this area will be neither Palestinian nor Jordanian. It is the expression of the American policy which opposes Palestinian rights to self-determination. Foreign investment, they think, will bolster non-nationalist tendencies and broaden the social base of the pro-American forces.»

Also in mid-October, Freij, the only mayor of a major West Bank town not disposed by the Israelis, and five mayors appointed by the 'civil' administration, as well as a village league head and a West Bank deputy in the Jordanian parliament were invited to attend the cocktail party held by Defense Minister Rabin for his US counterpart, Weinberger. This meeting was condemned by Palestinian nationalists such as mayors Bassam Shakaa and Karim Khalaf, and Haider Abdul Shafi, head of Gaza's Red Crescent Society.

These political and economic moves combine into the most serious attempt to date to split the united position of the Palestinians under occupation. Waving dollars and promises of less restrictions, the enemy forces hope to entice an exclusive group of Palestinian businessmen and pro-Jordanian notables to definitively break ranks with the majority's adherence to the PLO and its goal of an independent state. More dangerous still is that the enemy hopes to broaden this group to include middle class professionals and intellectuals who are sincerely concerned about the desperate need for development in the