

basis of redistributing power among the representatives of the sects. Therefore, the matter hinges on the balance of power between the nationalist alliance as a whole and the enemy, and between the different social groups within the national alliance. The matter is one of conflict within unity: How to manage such a conflict between the nationalist forces within the framework of the primary contradiction between these forces as a whole and the main enemy. This must be done so that the working class party neither be isolated from other forces that have an interest in fighting Israeli occupation, nor submit to the lowest denominator of the program of its allies, for in the final analysis this does not lead to ending foreign domination.

*There have been attempts to belittle the role of the communists in the Lebanese national resistance. How do you explain this in terms of your party's desire not to put itself in the forefront, and in terms of others' role in belittling your contribution?*

Frankly, we are striving to establish better structures for waging the struggle, since it is not an easy one, and not one we would be comforted by the thought of waging alone. We have looked for formats which would facilitate the participation of others, and how their role would be made known. In our view, the degree of participation of other forces is the main challenge, on which the success or failure of this work hinges. If the struggle had been waged exclusively by the communists, it would have remained limited, qualitatively and quantitatively; the mobilization of the broadest energies for this national struggle task would have been obstructed; the communists would have continued to be honored for their role, but this could not have been transformed into a decisive historical movement in the Lebanese struggle, nor in terms of its regional impact. Therefore, the Party labored for a long time on the premise that the main task was for the struggle to grow, rather than the Party's declaring its own identity.

The Party's identity is self-evident. Thus, the most we want to accomplish is that our slogans of struggle are spread and that the influence of the direction we call for broadens; we are aware that this direction will subsequently yield gains, including organizational gains. The fact that there is no direct reflection of our work in the propaganda field does not bother us, for we consider the struggle to eliminate the Israeli occupation of the South to be a long and complicated process, not a matter of propaganda stunts, or dependent on what events surface.

We realize that some other forces, whose participation is essential on the mass level and important militarily, are more able than us to be on the surface at this specific stage, due to their nature. We have no mosques or *husainiyat* (religious community centers); nor do we have the protection of being associated with a particular sect, or any religious cover. It is completely natural for other forces to enjoy greater freedom of movement in work among the broad masses. Such is the case, for example, with the local bourgeoisie in Saida, that broad gathering whose nationalist positions are expressed by MP Nazeeh al Bizra. There is also Adel Oseiran (MP from the South, now Defense Minister), who surprised many by his nationalist positions at the Geneva and Lausanne conferences (held after the nationalist victories in Lebanon 1983-84). There is also the Amal movement with its broad potential for movement in the South, and the gatherings of Shiite theologians, among whom there are a number of militant patriots who encourage and participate in military operations.

We never viewed these forces to be in competition with us or in contradiction with our work, which is characterized by its internal, infrastructural and organizational nature in the military, organizational and mass fields. It is heartening for us that these allies started to realize with us that facing an enemy of such a nature requires an organizational structure for waging the struggle at the highest level.

Due to its radical and long-term nature, the struggle requires revolutionary organization and correct alliances between the forces that have an interest in continuing it. It does not bother us that the media does not mention the role of the communists, but we are outraged if the struggle is not presented in its true dimension, as a national liberation struggle against Israeli occupation and foreign domination. We are convinced that our role is obvious firstly to the masses in the South and secondly to the Lebanese masses as a whole. If we were forced to choose between a more distinguished role for ourselves as opposed to more breadth, we would prefer breadth. This does not stem from an idealistic position of self-negation, which some of our allies think is characteristic of us. No, it stems from concern for the interests, role and growth of the Party in the long-term battle, the results of which will not be measured like the daily tabulations of a shopkeeper, but by the final results of the struggle.

Some view the role of the Party in terms of the number of pictures allocated to it in the newspapers, but I would like to remind you of one fact: During the liberation war in Vietnam, pictures of Buddhist clergy burning themselves in protest against the actions of the occupation authorities dominated the news media, as a form of struggle for liberation. This did not bother the Vietnamese communists. On the contrary, it heartened them, for it expressed the fact that the liberation struggle encompassed very broad social sectors, including those clergymen, who were contributing heroically to the process of overall popular uprising against the occupation. The same is true in our case.

This is one side of the story. The other side is that there are many forces inside and outside of Lebanon that concentrate a great deal of energy on preventing the Lebanese communists from playing an essential role in the national liberation struggle. Due to their class positions, these forces realize that their room for maneuver vis-a-vis the national cause increases in proportion to the weakness of the positions of the party of the working class; that their ability to influence the struggle diminishes as the party of the working class assumes a greater role; that the horizons of the struggle will remain within the bounds of imperialism's supervision in one way or another, as long as the Communist Party does not assume a leading role; and that the horizons will go beyond the bounds of imperialist solutions if the Party assumes its vanguard role.

The role of the Party is not confined to the South, however central and essential this region may be, but encompasses the overall Lebanese struggle. As part of the designs of the enemy, there are attempts at stamping it out, so as to enhance the sectarian aspect at the expense of the class, social and national liberation nature of the battle. Accordingly, the sectarian fight is «legitimate», for it leads in the final analysis to sectarian solutions, but the fight for national liberation is «forbidden» so that a democratic solution will not impose itself. In this regard, one could see the direct influence of the US and the West in general, and of Arab and international reaction. We could also see some shortcomings on the part of the progressive national resistance, and some weaknesses in the Arab nationalist position.