

arms to the Lebanese army, and the Syrian units of the Arab Deterrent Force will return to Syria.

9. «*The basic concept of this plan is consistent with the objective of the Government of Lebanon that all foreign military forces withdraw from Lebanon.*»

These are the terms that were imposed as a result of the siege of Beirut and the balance of forces at the time. It is clear that this agreement cancels the Cairo agreement and all the rights of our people in Lebanon. Our arms were to be handed over and our fighters dispersed. The agreement included our formally taking as given final arrangements that would leave no foreign presence in Lebanon, including that of the Palestinian revolution.

The rightist leadership did not have the courage to cancel the Habib agreement. Possibly this was because of the critical situation, the sensitivity of the balance of forces, and the atmosphere of national unity at that time. But is it then logical to attack the Damascus agreement which cancelled the Habib agreement, and implemented the right of our people to political and military action? Why do they attack the Damascus agreement which deepened the nationalist relations between Palestinians and Lebanese, and which preserves the right of the Palestinian revolution to continue its struggle from Lebanon, side by side with the Lebanese masses and national forces? Is it not unfair to criticize the Damascus agreement which restored respect for the meaning of joint nationalist relations between Lebanese and Palestinians, which stopped bloodshed in the camps and in fact saved them?

Why the right attacks the Damascus agreement

The third fact concerns the credibility of the attackers. Those who now cry out against the Damascus agreement are well-known for their weak political stands throughout the history of the contemporary Palestinian revolution. Most, if not all, of the agreements they have made with the Arab authorities and others reflect a weak political stand. There are many examples, from the agreements made in Amman (after Black September 1970), to the Habib agreement in Beirut. In 1977, the Shtoura agreement was signed under conditions much less difficult than those which existed in the camps during the recent fighting. To those who pretend to forget, we mention some of the points of the Shtoura agreement: (1) removing all armed appearances; (2) hindering those who carry arms outside the camps; (3) withdrawing from the camps the arms which exceed the amount stipulated in the Cairo agreement; (4) stations will be assigned for the Arab Deterrent Force around the camps. Also included was that joint committees would be formed to supervise implementation of the agreement according to a schedule, and that the Arab Deterrent Force would attack any illegal arms stores in any part of Lebanon.

These are the points of an agreement that was signed at a time when the Palestinian revolution enjoyed considerable power from North to South Lebanon. It was at the time of the ascent of the Lebanese national forces, fighting side by side with us, politically and militarily. Yet the Lebanese national forces were disregarded in the Shtoura agreement.

In view of these facts, do those who raise their voices to outbid the Salvation Front in signing the Damascus agreement, have a right to be critical? Can we view the present conditions, the balance of forces and the Damascus agreement as a defeat, yet hold in regard the other agreements which included real concessions concerning the rights and gains of our people in Lebanon and elsewhere? Can we view the

agreements signed by the rightist leadership, under conditions better than the present, as victories or proof of their credibility and cleverness? What does this say about the credibility of the Palestinian right's attack on the Damascus agreement?

The roots of the problem

The fourth fact concerns the roots of the problem which we must view in a long-range perspective in order to see the essence of the right-wing's attack on the Damascus agreement. There are two main reasons for this campaign:

First: The right-wing deviators share a common denominator with those who initiated the camp war: an ultimate wish to devastate the camps. The deviators want this in order to take advantage of the catastrophe to go further in their involvement with the US solution for the area, in accordance with the Arafat-Hussein agreement. The second party, the initiators of the war, work to enact this catastrophe in order to strengthen their geopolitical position in Lebanon, and increase their share of the sectarian cake. This party hopes to benefit from an illusory political settlement for Lebanon. They proved their intent to get a bigger share of the cake by initiating the camp war.

Even if they appear to be at odds, these two parties start from a common point, and both will be harmed by the implementation of the Damascus agreement. They will try to keep it from working by all means.

Second: the struggle in the Palestinian arena between two political lines affects all aspects of Palestinian action. The Salvation Front is the pole opposing the deviationist line. The Salvation Front is striving to gain legitimacy in leading the Palestinian people on the basis of a clear program, adhering to the PLO and its patriotic program, and confronting the capitulationist forces. Accordingly, the capitulationist forces put all their energy into defending their positions and policies, by rejecting the leadership and role of the Salvation Front, because it is the antithesis of their capitulation.

The Salvation Front put all its political, military and popular capacities of steadfastness to defend the camps of Beirut, then concluded the Damascus agreement which recognizes it as the leadership of the Palestinian people in Lebanon. In view of this, it is not logical to accuse the Salvation Front and question the credibility of its leadership. This campaign against the Salvation Front is actually an extension of the struggle between the two main political lines in the Palestinian arena; there is no other explanation for it, if we view the terms of the Damascus agreement honestly and concretely.

The deviating rightist leadership has accustomed us to the continuing concessions it has freely made. This same leadership views the Damascus agreement with bitterness, jealous of the military and political leadership of the Salvation Front which was tested for the first time on this level, and proved its credibility. The heroic struggle of our people in the camp war proved their potential for even greater struggle if there is a steadfast leadership with a clear political line, defending Palestinian rights in life and revolution, and defending the PLO national program. In contrast, the capitulating leadership is fearful; it has landed in defeatism and is running after its own interests. It is this leadership that has squandered our people's steadfastness and the gains of their struggle.