

Compromising on Details

The Palestinian right-wing lets the US Administration pick «acceptable» Palestinians, while hastening an Arab summit.

In defiance of the objective lessons of Palestinian experience and the current balance of power, the Palestinian right wing continues to seek a US-sponsored «solution». The rightist leadership's main preoccupation was clearly articulated by Arafat's promise in mid-May, that he would explicitly accept UN Security Council resolution no.242 (i.e. Israel's right to existence and security), if the US explicitly recognizes the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

King Hussein's May visit to Washington D.C. was intended to pave the way for a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation to meet with US Assistant Secretary of State Murphy in Amman. US officials were reportedly pleased with what Hussein had to say, specifically about the prospect of Hussein gaining PLO acceptance of 242. Moreover, they were reassured that in Hussein's plan the idea of an international conference is only «window dressing». «According to informed sources, Hussein told administration officials that he is just as opposed to Soviet participation as they... Hussein suggested that the US set stiff requirements, such as the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, as a prerequisite for Soviet participation.» («Middle East Policy Survey», May 31, 1985.)

In June, the illegitimate PLO Executive Committee, as well as Fatah's Central Committee, formally approved the formation of a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation. The Jordanian authorities presented the US with a list of Palestinians chosen by the right-wing leadership to participate in the joint delegation's talks with Murphy.

Arafat lets Reagan do the choosing

Thus from compromising on principles, Arafat and his followers have moved to the predictable position of compromising on details. They have diluted the right of the Palestinian people to choose their own representatives by according to the US (and ultimately 'Israel') the prerogative of determining which Palestinians are acceptable for negotiations. To back up the attempt to

woo US imperialism, a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation visited a number of European capitals in late June, for talks with officials.

Meanwhile the Palestinian right has endeavored to exploit the tragedy that befell the Palestinian people in May and June when the refugee camps of Beirut were under attack. On the Arab level, Arafat has worked diligently for convening an Arab summit. On the Palestinian level, Executive Committee member Farouk Qaddoumi appealed to all Palestinian forces to transform the unity in struggle, that prevailed in the Beirut camps, into political unity. However, this appeal made no mention of addressing the main issue causing division in the PLO's ranks: Arafat's February 11th accord with King Hussein. This appeal was thus not taken seriously by the majority of resistance organizations that have called for abrogation of this accord as a prerequisite for reestablishing Palestinian national unity. Some had earlier hoped that there were Fatah Central Committee members who had reservations about the February 11th accord, and would break ranks with the right's deviating policy. However, such hopes have proved to be baseless. Fatah's Central Committee is working in a concerted, unified manner to implement the terms of the accord, despite the steady emergence of concrete proof that this undermines not only Palestinian struggle but the essence of the PLO as well.

US reserve and Israeli no's

The right-wing policy is running into other obstacles besides massive Palestinian opposition. The joint delegation visit to Europe showed clearly that these governments have retreated from the 1980 Venice Declaration (which in itself was unsatisfactory, but was hailed as an advance by the Palestinian right at the time). With the exception of Greece, no West European government will chart a course in the Middle East that differs in more than appearance from that of the US. Betting on a formula whereby Western Europe would influence the US, who in turn would pressure 'Israel', is but an

illusion. This remains true despite secondary contradictions between the capitalist states, and between any of them and 'Israel'.

Playing its deceptive role as «arbiter» in the Middle East, the US administration received the Palestinian list for study. The thing to watch is not what might be said about certain names on the list, but that the US hastened to reaffirm that talks with the joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation were only as a prelude to direct negotiations with 'Israel' based on resolutions 242 and 338. By supporting direct negotiations, the US in fact supports the Israelis' right to choose which Palestinians to talk to.

As was to be expected, Shamir rejected the list of Palestinians for the joint negotiating team out of hand, and said the US should do the same. Peres also initially refused the list, for whom it included and whom it omitted. Yet a week later he had found two «acceptable» names: Hanna Seniora (editor of the Arabic daily *Al Fajr*) and Faez Abu Rahma (former head of the Gaza bar association). One need not delve into the personal or political history of these two persons to see why Peres deemed them «acceptable», for this is not the point. The point is that they are resident in the 1967 occupied territories. Endeavoring to ignore not only the PLO

