

DEMOCRATIC

No. 9

PALESTINE

June 1985

*Heroic Defense
of Beirut Camps*



Democratic Palestine is an English language magazine published by the PFLP with the following aims:

- conveying the political line of the PFLP and other progressive Palestinian and Arab forces;
- providing current information and analysis pertinent to the Palestinian liberation struggle, as well as developments on the Arab and international levels;
- serving as forum for building relations of mutual solidarity between the Palestinian revolution and progressive organizations, parties, national liberation movements and countries around the world.

You can support these aims by subscribing to *Democratic Palestine*. Furthermore, we hope that you will encourage friends and comrades to read and subscribe to *Democratic Palestine*. We also urge you to send us comments, criticisms and proposals concerning the magazine's contents.

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Democratic Palestine is also distributed by Das Arabische Buch, Wundstr. 21, 1 West Berlin 19, West Germany.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is a Marxist-Leninist organization and an integral component of the Palestine Liberation Organization. A primary motive for establishing the PFLP was to inject a clear class perspective in the Palestinian national liberation struggle. Experience shows that the most oppressed classes—the workers, peasants, sectors of the petit bourgeoisie, the camp Palestinians—are those most in contradiction with imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. It is they who carve history with determination that can persevere in a protracted war against the enemy alliance.

The PFLP is deeply committed to the unity and independent, national decision-making of the Palestinian people and their sole legitimate representative, the PLO. To this end, we work for strengthening the role of the Palestinian left, thereby accentuating the PLO's anti-imperialist line in common struggle with the Arab national liberation movement.

The process of liberating Palestine relies on radical, national democratic change or development in one or more of the surrounding Arab countries. This will provide the PLO with a strong base for liberating Palestine. Thus the struggle for a democratic Palestine is linked to the creation of a united, democratic, and ultimately socialist, Arab society. This will provide the objective basis for eradicating the poverty, exploitation, oppression and the problem of minorities, from which the people of the area suffer.

As a cornerstone in this process, the establishment of a democratic, secular state in Palestine will provide a democratic solution for the Jewish question in this area, while simultaneously restoring the national rights of the Palestinian people. After liberation, Jews in Palestine, like all citizens, will enjoy equal rights and duties. The decision of the PLO to establish an independent Palestinian state on any liberated part of the national soil is a step in this direction. It is the sincere hope of all Palestinian revolutionaries that more and more Israelis will recognize that they, too, have become victims of Zionism's racism, expansionism, exploitation and militarism, and will join us in the struggle for a democratic Palestine.

Editor's Note

We apologize for the long delay in reaching you with *Democratic Palestine*. Most of you never received issue no.8 because its distribution was held up due to reasons beyond our control. We are sending you this issue from Cyprus, but our correspondence address remains the same. Because of the long gap in our information, we devote this column to an update on the internal Palestinian situation.

Prelude to the PNSF

The Amman accord signed by Arafat and King Hussein in mid-February brought new urgency to the democratic struggle to remove the Palestinian right wing from the leadership of the PLO. In the PFLP's view, it necessitated the immediate formation of a broad national front, to fight deviation and return the PLO to its national, anti-imperialist line. The point of departure for such a front would be unity on this aim between all Palestinian organizations and nationalist personalities; this encompassed the organizations of both the Democratic Alliance and the National Alliance.

The Aden agreement of March 1984, between the four organizations of the Democratic Alliance, included the concept of forming a broad national front. So naturally, after the Amman accord, the PFLP turned first to its allies in the Democratic Alliance for consultation. Though there was agreement on the imperative of confronting the Amman accord, there were differences on the organizational means for doing so. Moreover, there was divergence as to the degree of stress on the necessity of removing Arafat from the chairmanship of the PLO. The DFLP preferred that the Democratic Alliance alone serve as the framework for confronting the Amman accord, in conjunction with the mass organizations in occupied Palestine. Also, the Palestinian Communist Party was unprepared to take new organizational steps. Instead it proposed calling for popular congresses among the various Palestinian communities, to decide how to confront the agreement. Since then the DFLP and the Palestinian Communist Party have continued their work in the framework of the Democratic Alliance, issuing a call for popular congresses.

The PFLP, however, remained convinced that broad unity and an organizational framework was necessary for confronting the Amman accord, and that it was equally necessary to remove the deviationists from leadership if the PLO was to return to its anti-imperialist line. In view of the Palestinian right wing's quick successive steps into involvement in the US plans, there was no time to waste. Accordingly, the PFLP and also the Palestinian Liberation Front entered into discussions with the National Alliance organizations on the formation of a broad national front opposed to deviation. A political program was quickly agreed upon. After agreement on the organizational program, the Palestine National Salvation Front was formed and announced on March 15th.

Palestinian Camps Attacked

As we go to press, the Amal movement, together with the 6th and 8th Brigades of the Lebanese Army, continue their savage offensive against the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut. These forces are using a wide range of weaponry, including heavy artillery and rocket launchers, hence inflicting excessive death and injury on the Palestinian masses, and causing heavy damage to the camps. It is clear that Amal is determined to capture and destroy the camps, and disarm the Palestinians. Amal has turned a deaf ear to appeals from Lebanese, Arab and international progressive forces, to stop these attacks.

Amal launched its attack on the false pretext of combatting Arafat's forces and ill designs for Lebanon, but everyone knows that Arafat's influence in Lebanon now is limited. Rather the attack on the camps is hitting the Palestinians who are opposed to Arafat's deviating policies, and who joined Lebanese progressives and nationalists in fighting the US, Israeli and fascist forces in Lebanon.

One can trace Amal's preparations for the attack on the camps back to when the Israeli occupation forces started evacuating South Lebanon. At this time, the Amal movement began preparing itself politically and militarily. It began agitating its members against the Palestinians. It began to strike out at the Palestinians and even more at Lebanese progressives. Nabih Berri has more than once stated that Amal will prevent the Palestinians from attacking the Zionist enemy across Lebanon's border, and that only the «legal Lebanese» institutions, together with Amal, are responsible for security in the Palestinian camps.

To avoid conflict with Amal, the Palestine National Salvation Front had previously presented a working paper to Lebanese parties, including Amal. This paper outlined the PNSF's view on how to regulate relations between Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces, based on the necessity of consolidating the Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian alliance. Instead of responding to this working paper, Amal opened fire on the Palestinian camps.

The fact of the matter is that the Amal movement is abiding by the Zionist enemy's conditions as spelled out in an Amal-Israeli agreement, reached through French mediation. Thus, Amal, the 6th and 8th Brigades, and their backers are attempting to end the Palestinian nationalist role in Lebanon.

At this juncture, we must reaffirm that we will fight all such secret and public agreements until we foil them. We will never give up our right to defend the Palestinian refugee camps. We would like to remind all conspirators - old and new - that past attempts to control or liquidate our people have failed. Our people are determined to continue their struggle until fulfilling their national rights.

Press Release May 25th:

More than 300 Palestinian and Arab women are now staging a sit-in at the Red Cross headquarters in Damascus. They call on international humanitarian organizations to send the needed medical supplies and insure the flow of water to the besieged Palestinian camps in Beirut. The protesting women

also called on international organizations to intervene to end the siege of the camps.

PFLP Military Statement May 25th:

Due to the failure of Amal and the 6th Brigade to break into the Palestinian camps in Beirut, the Lebanese Army leadership prepared to send select military forces to support the attackers. The 6th Brigade was provided with new armaments and a special road opened for it through East Beirut (excerpt).

PFLP Military Statement May 26th:

The forces of the Palestinian revolution succeeded in pushing back the attackers' advance in Sabra and Shatila camps. Bourj al Barajneh is under heavy snelling. This morning the Amal forces escalated their provocations in the Baalbek area and increased their blockades around Al Jalil camp (Eastern Lebanon).

The PFLP military spokesman announced that new efforts are being made to reduce the siege of the camps. To this purpose, special units of the Palestinian revolution, joined by Lebanese nationalists, have begun striking the attackers from the rear. Two such attacks were successfully carried out today against Amal positions in Hamed Street and Barbour Street (excerpt).

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Comrade Habash: Hands Off Our Camps!

On May 24th, Dr. George Habash, General secretary of the PFLP, made a statement about the May 1985 Sabra-Shatila massacres. Below is a summary:

«There are claims that what is going on in Lebanon is the result of an individual incident that accidentally expanded, or of Arafat's doings, or of the return of Palestinian armed presence as in the past. All these are false claims. The real reason for the horrible events is the decision of the Amal leadership and its supporters to completely eliminate the Palestinians' armed role in Lebanon. The target of this bloody attack is the Palestinian national role pursued by the Salvation Front which aims to solidly confront the deviating line in the PLO. The Salvation Front has seriously evaluated the negative aspects of the pre-1982 stage in order to renew the Palestinian national role in Lebanon in a way which suits this stage of struggle.»

Comrade Habash stressed five important points:

«1. Our energies must be concentrated on confronting the dangers of deviation which would lead to the liquidation of our people's cause.

2. We will solve the contradictions between the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist forces in a spirit of brotherhood which serves the joint struggle against the enemy.

3. We will continue to strengthen the Syrian-Lebanese-Palestinian national alliance so that it may shoulder its tasks at this critical political turning point in the history of our Arab nation.

4. Relations among the components of this triangle of steadfastness should not be based on domination, or on forcibly disarming the Palestinian revolution.

5. The Palestinian national role should be effective everywhere there are Palestinian people, primarily in occupied Palestine, in Lebanon, Syria and elsewhere.»

In conclusion, Comrade Habash said, «We shout with our loudest voice: Hands off our people's camps! Stop the fighting and the undermining of cease-fires, in order to unify our ranks and confront the dangers threatening Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian cause.»

Comrade Habash sent his regards to the Palestinian people, and those resisting in the camps of Beirut in particular: «I salute every fighter defending their gun. I call on our masses to hold on to their weapons and fight to defend our people and cause.»

PNSF Holds Amal Responsible

PNSF Press Release

On May 23rd, the Palestinian National Salvation Front leadership met to discuss the situation in the camps of Beirut. It reviewed its own efforts to stop the fighting in and around the camps. Its calls for a cease-fire and a joint Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian meeting were rejected by the Amal movement. Moreover, Amal has violated all cease-fire agreements and continued to fire on the camps and enact massacres against the civilian population. In the light of this review, the PNSF decided to declare the following facts to the Palestinian people and the Arab nation.

1. Amal claims that its attack on the camps developed from an individual incident. This is absolutely untrue, because the contacts that took place after the said incident could have contained any repercussions if that were the case.

2. We do not agree with Amal's claim that all that is happening in Lebanon is a result of a plan orchestrated by Arafat. We denounce Arafat's deviating, capitulationist line. The Palestinian masses in Lebanon have rejected Arafat's line and its proponents. They declared their support to the PNSF and its political line, and hosted the PNSF delegation in Sabra, Shatila and Bourj al Barajneh and Mar Elias camps.

3. The real explanation for Amal's attacks lies in its claim that it will not allow the Palestinian resistance movement to repeat the pre-1982 experience. Yet even this claim is not true. The PNSF presented a working-paper, on how to regulate Palestinian presence in Lebanon, to the different Lebanese forces, including the Amal movement and the Lebanese National Democratic Front. On May 20th, Amal's Politbureau

was supposed to respond to that paper. On the same day, Amal started its attacks on the camps.

Thus, the PNSF leadership can only see what is happening in Beirut as the implementation of a political decision on the part of the Amal movement. This decision serves only the enemy camp which previously failed to achieve its goals. We hold the Amal leadership responsible for the Palestinian and Lebanese blood shed. We demand that this leadership stop the massacres immediately. We demand that it order a cease-fire, withdraw all forces from around the camps, and enter into a dialogue to regulate our militant relations. The framework for such dialogue is a Syrian-Lebanese-Palestinian one. The basis for cooperation should be agreed upon.



Editorial

Fighting Deviation To Return the PLO to the National Line

The formation of the Palestine National Salvation Front was premised on conviction that the PLO must return to its anti-imperialist course if the Palestinian people are to regain their rights. Equally, it was based on conviction that the leadership grouped around Yasir Arafat had chosen the opposite: involvement with US imperialism's plans via alignment with Arab reaction. The principles of the Palestinian revolution are not abstractions, but forged from the experience of decades of struggle against Zionism and imperialism. By violating these principles, the rightists have exposed their own bankruptcy: They cannot unite and mobilize the masses to struggle for their rights; nor can their diplomacy wrest these rights from the iron grip of the enemy.

Cancelling the Amman accord

Arafat's signing the accord with King Hussein made the Palestinian right's deviation from the national line official, qualitative and irreversible. By agreeing to a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation to negotiate an exchange of «land for peace» with 'Israel', the rightist leadership in effect recognized the Zionist occupation of Palestine; it relinquished the struggle for Palestinian national rights and the PLO's exclusive representation. Thus, in the wake of holding an illegal, divisive PNC session in Amman, the Palestinian right slammed the door on attempts to reunify the PLO. For Palestinian forces determined to continue the revolution, cancelling the Amman accord and removing its proponents became the top priority, as the only way to return the PLO to its national line. To this purpose the PNSF was formed.

The Palestinian people rallied around the PLO because it represented their path to liberation. Now the right wing is using the legitimacy gained by the PLO from this mass support, to its own narrow class ends, to enter a US-sponsored solution which will consolidate the Zionist occupation and reactionary control in the area. This has left many of our people without an organizational framework to channel their will for self-determination. The PNSF works to sustain our people's mobilization as the ultimate guarantee that the PLO can be returned to the national line and regain the functions for which it exists. Closely related to this is escalating the armed struggle which stands as an obstacle to the renewed attempts to bury the Palestinian cause.

The PNSF is playing a role to save the Palestinian revolution's alliances from the chasm into which they were thrust by the right wing. In the face of the right's alliance with Arab reaction, the PNSF serves as a center for strengthening alliances with the forces of the Arab national liberation movement. Combatting the Amman accord is not only a Palestinian task; this accord sets the stage for expanding Camp David, a matter of crucial concern for all progressive forces and nationalist regimes.

Our international allies have been deeply disturbed by the right wing's opting for US-sponsored solutions. Anti-imperialist

forces all over the world are confronting US imperialism's increasing aggressiveness. None have interests in a Reagan victory in the Middle East, which would be the case if Camp David is expanded. In the PNSF, the forces of peace and progress, especially the socialist community headed by the Soviet Union, find an active partner in the anti-imperialist struggle.

Kissinger's legacy

Ensuing political developments have only emphasized the depth of the Palestinian right's commitment to the Amman accord and all its dangerous consequences. Schultz's visit to 'Israel', Egypt and Jordan, May 9-13th, confirmed the contents of the «solution» under discussion. Just before Schultz's arrival, the Jordanian government declared that the PLO had responded «positively» to the US condition earlier conveyed by Murphy, that Palestinians in the joint delegation should have no relation to the PLO. Thus, Schultz's visit revolved on the details of forming a list of «acceptable» Palestinians. The Israeli government declared that the delegation must not include «persons belonging to an organization committed to the Palestinian National Charter.» On leaving Jordan, Schultz declared: «There will be a Palestinian-Jordan delegation or group. It may be different people will be needed for different purposes.» In its attempts to have the PLO acquiesce in liquidating the Palestinian cause, US policy has developed Kissinger's divide-and-rule style of negotiations to new heights: Some Palestinians to talk to the US, others to 'Israel', with the Jordanian regime being the ultimate negotiating partner to bury all Palestinian independence. The enemy's plan for resolving the details is for Jordan to declare a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation, the government of which will appoint the delegation to negotiate, forever ending the concept of an independent Palestinian state.

Having compromised on principles, the right-wing leadership is now enmeshed in compromising on the details. Arafat was closely, though indirectly, involved in the Jordanian discussions with Schultz, consulting with King Hussein before and after, while Hussein coordinated with Saudi King Fahd and Egyptian ruler Mubarak. King Hussein's upcoming Washington visit reflects the seriousness of the current political moves. It becomes ever clearer that the clause about an international conference in the Amman accord, is but a camouflage for capitulation to Kissinger-style, step-by-step, bilateral negotiations. Statements by members of Fatah's Central Committee, disclaiming various points of the Amman accord and its consequences, only contribute to this attempt to confuse the masses. If these persons are to be taken seriously, they must make a clean break with Arafat's leadership. The right wing's commitment to the Amman accord has been amply proven. All Palestinian revolutionary forces are called upon to support the PNSF so that its ranks and activities be expanded to confront this most serious effort to liquidate the Palestinian cause.

Platform of the PNSF

On March 25th, a press conference was convened in Damascus to announce the formation of the Palestine National Salvation Front (PNSF). In attendance were the General Secretaries of the PNSF's component organizations: George Habash of the PFLP, Ahmed Jibril of the PFLP-General Command, Abu Musa of Fatah-Provisional Leadership, Samir Goshe of the Popular Struggle Front, and Issam al Qadi of Saiqa. Also present were PNC President Khalid Fahoum, and PLO Executive Committee members: Abu Maher Yamani, Abel Mohsen al Maizer, Mohammad Khalifeh, and Talal Naji. Journalists were presented with the text of the PNSF's political program, which is as follows:

Preamble

The Palestinian people have accomplished major gains through their prolonged struggle, especially the past twenty years of the modern Palestinian revolution. These gains are manifest in the following:

- keeping the Palestinian cause alive despite all attempts to liquidate it;
- reuniting the Palestinian people in one national entity;
- asserting the militant, independent identity of the Palestinian people in the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO);
- gaining Arab and international recognition of the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. These gains have been achieved through all means of struggle, first and foremost armed struggle. For the sake of these gains, the Palestinian people have offered great sacrifices.

The PLO embodies the will, unity and struggle of the Palestinian people to achieve their national aims. Thus, the PLO has been the most important obstacle in the face of the liquidationist, capitulationist plans and projects. It is the most effective weapon in the hands of our people in their struggle to achieve their national rights, namely the right to return to our homeland, exercise self-determination and establish an independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian national soil.

The PLO is faced with internal and external threats. These endanger the national cause. They endanger the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people, as well as its independence and its national program opposed to imperialism, Zionism, reaction and capitulation.

Egypt was withdrawn from the Arab-Zionist conflict as a result of Sadat's policy. This led the Egyptian government to sign the Camp David accords and the Egyptian-Israeli treaty. This fact encouraged imperialism and Zionism to intensify their offensive in the Arab region. The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon was the culmination of this offensive. This invasion led to the evacuation of the Palestinian revolution's forces from South Lebanon and Beirut. Hence, the Palestinian revolution faced difficult objective and subjective (internal) conditions. The imperialist-Zionist-reactionary plots intensified, aiming to liquidate the Palestinian people's national cause. Accordingly, they have attempted to divert the PLO from the nationalist path opposed to liquidation. They have tried to split, liquidate and impose hegemony over the PLO.

These realities brought the PLO face to face with a crisis. This crisis was aggravated by the ongoing wrong practices of the deviating right-wing leadership in political, military, organizational and financial matters. The leadership started to deal openly with US liquidationist solutions. For example, it claimed there were positive points in the Reagan plan. It continued con-

tacts with the Egyptian regime. It shifted its alliances and relations on the Arab and international levels. It continued to hold meetings with prominent Zionist figures. It tried to put an end to the role of the Palestinian revolutionary forces in Lebanon. It dispersed the revolution's forces to Arab countries far from the focal point of the struggle against the Zionist enemy. It concentrated on diplomatic moves rather than armed struggle. It dealt a blow to the principle of unity, and conducted the affairs of the PLO singlehandedly. It kept violating the resolutions of the Palestinian National Council (PNC). It misused and wasted the funds of the Palestinian National Fund.

Later, Arafat visited Cairo and met Husni Mubarak, despite the fact that the Egyptian regime was still committed to the Camp David accords. By so doing, Arafat relieved the Egyptian regime from its isolation in Arab and Islamic circles. Arafat acted in harmony with the policy of the Jordanian regime. In April 1984, he was about to sign a joint statement with this regime. He convened an illegal session of the PNC in November 1984. On February 11, 1985, he did in fact sign an agreement with King Hussein of Jordan. This liquidationist deal signifies the Palestinian right wing's direct involvement in the US liquidationist plans. It threatens the national cause. It means that the Palestinian right wing has given up the PLO's right to represent the Palestinian people.

These practices have clarified the qualitative threat that the deviating, capitulationist line poses to the national cause. This line is in clear-cut violation of the resolutions of the PNC sessions and the will of our people. It has dealt a severe blow to the common political base of Palestinian national unity. The danger of this line lies in its attempt to drag the PLO towards the positions of the reactionary, capitulationist camp, towards the Camp David accords and the Reagan plan. Therefore, this deviating line and its proponents are considered the main threat facing the Palestinian people. This line threatens the revolution from within. It threatens the correctness of the revolution's political line, its nationalist program and its achievements.

Recent developments have proven that all the previous practices (of the deviating leadership) were not merely exploratory tactics or small mistakes. They are links in a chain, constituting a line that attempts to seek common ground with the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary solutions of liquidation.

Thus by following this line, the leadership has put itself in contradiction with the real interests and goals of our masses. By so doing, it has proven itself to be corrupt and incompetent. This leadership is unable to continue the struggle for our national goals. With its deviating line, it is held responsible for all the problems that the Palestinian revolution is facing in all aspects and arenas.

Our masses have upheld the national cause, the PLO and its achievements. The Palestinian organizations, forces and nationalist personalities have rejected all the policies followed by the deviating, capitulationist leadership. Using all means available, these forces have tried to ensure the continuity of the PLO and its nationalist role as a force opposed to imperialism, Zionism and reaction, but in vain. The leadership of the deviating, capitulationist line was not satisfied with convening the illegal, divisive session of the PNC in Amman. It also signed the Amman agreement with King Hussein on February 11, 1985.

This agreement was a response to the essential elements of King Hussein's initiative which he spelled out at the illegal 17th PNC SESSION. It is based on acceptance of the liquidationist Security Council resolution 242 and the formula of exchanging «land for peace». By so doing, the Palestinian right wing has given up the struggle to liberate our land. It gave guarantees for the enemy's security. It gave the Jordanian regime permission to negotiate with the Zionist enemy on behalf of the Palestinian people. This will allow the regime to conclude a capitulationist deal with the enemy at the expense of our people's rights and national cause. This is tantamount to the liquidation of the PLO and its achievements. In so doing, the Palestinian right wing leadership has placed itself outside the realm of the national struggle.

The Amman agreement was signed at a time when the reactionary Arab regimes had intensified their moves to join the Camp David accords and reactivate the Reagan plan. Therefore, this agreement is also considered a threat to the Arab national liberation movement and to the world revolution.

The escalation of the militant spirit of our people and nation affirms the possibility and inevitability of foiling the enemies' plans. Our optimism stems from the fact that our people in the occupied homeland continue to confront the Zionist occupation and settler colonialism. Our people are confronting all the enemy campaigns of repression, oppression and land confiscation. They are using all means of struggle to combat the conspiracy of 'autonomy', the Camp David accords and all other plans for capitulation and annexation.

In Lebanon, the US-Zionist-fascist alliance was defeated. The capitulationist May 17th treaty (which was planned as the second link in the chain of Camp David) was abrogated. The Lebanese National Resistance, together with the Palestinian forces, was able to inflict heavy losses on the US Marines and the Multinational Force, imposing their withdrawal from Leba-

non. The Lebanese-Syrian-Palestinian alliance was able to force unconditional withdrawal on the Zionist enemy. This occurred with the support of the national and progressive Arab regimes and forces, and of the forces of liberation and progress in the world, first and foremost the friendly Soviet Union.

The formation of the Palestine National Salvation Front is dictated by our concern for our people's rights and the future of our national cause. It is dictated by the importance of confronting the threats surrounding our revolution. This front shall comprise all Palestinian organizations, forces and nationalist personalities that uphold the PLO, its National Charter and internal regulations, and the resolutions of the consecutive, legal PNC sessions. The PNSF shall comprise all those who are concerned about preserving the nationalist line of the PLO opposed to imperialism, Zionism and reaction. The PNSF shall comprise those who reject the illegal 17th PNC session, and consider its political and organizational results to be invalid.

Political Tasks

1. To uphold the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; to adhere to the PLO's national political program, organizational program, the National Charter and the resolutions of the consecutive, legal PNC sessions, which safeguard the nationalist line and achievements. To strengthen front work within the PLO. To confront any organizational form that is an alternative to the PLO, or that undermines the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people, whether through authorization, mandating, sharing or relinquishing that representation.

2. To struggle to abrogate the Amman agreement signed by Arafat and Hussein, and all its consequences, because it is illegal; it does not represent the will of the Palestinian people and the PLO is not bound to it. To consider anyone who accepts this agreement, or participates in executing it, as being outside the realm of the nationalist position.

3. To struggle to foil the deviating line, which is squandering the PLO's gains, and to remove the proponents of this line. To restore the PLO to its nationalist line and safeguard its achievements.

4. To escalate armed struggle against the Zionist enemy in the occupied homeland and from all fronts surrounding Palestine. To reorganize the Palestinian revolution's forces to make them more effective and able to carry out their national duty.

PNSF Internal Regulations

On April 14th, the PNSF issued its internal regulations. The PNSF Leadership consists of the President of the PNC; PLO Executive Committee members and general secretaries of the organizations that signed the PNSF political platform and organizational framework; one representative from each member organization not represented in the PLO Executive Committee; and a number of independent nationalist personalities agreed on by consensus. The Leadership's regular biweekly meetings require a 2/3 quorum. Ordinary decisions are taken by absolute majority, but political resolutions or any amendment of the political platform and organizational framework require consensus.

For broader discussion and supervision of the work, a Leadership Council was established to consist of the PNSF Leadership; two members from each member organization participating in the leadership; general secretaries of unions

and mass organizations as decided by consensus; and a number of independent nationalist or specially qualified persons nominated by consensus.

From the PNSF Leadership, Abu Maher Yamani (PFLP) was chosen as Secretary to head the Secretariat composed of the heads of the ad hoc committees. As of now, committees have been established as follows: Foreign Relations, headed by Abdel Muhsin Al Maizer; Military headed by Abu Khaled Al Amle (Fatah-Provisional Leadership); Information, headed by Khaled Abdel Majed (PSF); Organizational and Mass Work, headed by Talal Naji (PFLP-GC); Social, Finance and Administration, headed by Abu Al Malmoun (PLF); Occupied Homeland, headed by Mohammad Khalifeh (Saiqa).

The regulations provide for branches to be set up wherever possible with a leadership composed of representatives from each member organization, plus independent nationalist personalities.



5. To reactivate the Palestinian National Front (PNF) in the occupied territories, in cooperation with all organizations, forces and nationalist personalities that are combatting the line of deviation and squander. The reactivation shall be based on the nationalist program of the PLO for fighting the Zionist occupation forces and their practices and projects. It shall be based on abrogation of the Amman agreement and confronting the reactionary policies of the Jordanian regime and its stooges, that seek to intervene in Palestinian affairs and annex Palestinian land.

6. To confront the Jordanian regime's policy which aims to join the US liquidationist solutions. These aim to liquidate the Palestinian cause, to put an end to the Arab-Zionist conflict at the expense of Palestinian and Arab rights, and to annul the right of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people.

7. To strengthen the strategic alliance with Syria in order to be able to restore the inalienable Palestinian rights, first and foremost the right to return to the homeland, exercise self-determination and establish an independent Palestinian state under the leadership of the PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. To strengthen the strategic alliance with Syria in order to be able to liberate all occupied Arab land. To struggle jointly against the Zionist policy of aggression and usurpation, and against the US-Zionist plans for hegemony, especially the Camp David accords and the Reagan plan. To struggle jointly against the Amman agreement signed by Arafat and Hussein, and against all projects of the Arab reactionary alliance.

8. To work jointly with the Lebanese National Democratic Front and the Amal movement to escalate the armed struggle against the Zionist occupation in South Lebanon. To support their struggle to restore Lebanon's sovereignty, unity, democratic development and Arab identity. To cooperate with them in order to guarantee: (a) The security of our masses and the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. (b) Our people's social interests and civil rights. (c) Our people's right to organize and engage in political activities and join the ranks of the Palestinian revolution. (d) The work of the PLO's institutions through the PNSF and its leadership.

9. To strengthen relations with the Egyptian nationalist forces. To continue the joint struggle against the Egyptian regime. To besiege and isolate this regime until the fall of the Camp David accords, in accordance with the resolutions of the PNC and the Baghdad Summit.

10. To strongly combat all secret and public contacts between the proponents of the deviating line and Zionist forces and personalities, for these contacts threaten our national rights.

11. To strengthen militant relations with the forces, organizations and parties of the Arab national liberation movement in order to fulfill the national and progressive tasks of fighting imperialism, Zionism and their allies in the region. To strengthen these relations in order to enrich the struggle against the line of deviation and squander and the proponents of this line.

12. To strengthen relations with the national and progressive Arab regimes in Syria, the Libyan Jamaheiria, Democratic Yemen and Algeria. To act to revive the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front in order that it fulfill its national tasks.

13. To strengthen and develop military relations with the countries of the socialist community, first and foremost the friendly Soviet Union. To strengthen and develop militant relations with all movements of liberation, progress and democracy in the world, and to urge support for the PNSF.

14. To enhance friendship and cooperation with the nonaligned countries, with Latin American, Asian and African countries, and with all forces that support the just struggle of the Palestinian people.

Organizational framework

1. The PNSF is a provisional framework. It works to restore the PLO to its nationalist line opposed to imperialism, Zionism, reaction and capitulation. It also works to foil the line of deviation and to remove its proponents in order to guarantee the continuity of the revolution.

2. The PNSF shall comprise Palestinian organizations, forces and nationalist personalities wherever they may be. The PNSF is open to anyone who agrees to its political program.

3. Relations within the PNSF are based on democratic principles for working in a front.

4. The PNSF shall have a nationalist leadership. Its decisions are taken by consensus. If a consensus is not reached, each party has the right to propagate its own position independently.

5. The PNSF shall form ad hoc committees to execute its main tasks. The number of these depends on the PNSF's need. These committees are to draw up working programs and internal regulations on which the PNSF leadership must decide.

Support to the PNSF

Among the many prominent nationalists in the occupied territories, who made statements supporting the PNSF, were the following:

Bassam Shakaa, elected mayor of Nablus

«Holding the Amman Council, signing the Amman accord, and the events which preceded, accompanied and ensued, all manifest insistence on sac-

rificing the PLO's revolutionary accomplishment, external relations, internal unity and leadership of the Palestinian people-the very factors which made the Palestinian cause the most burning one in the world. Therefore, it was of utmost importance to find fresh frameworks for struggle in order to keep the revolution's accomplishments intact... These frameworks must be careful not to lead to the development of blocs, and I feel the Salvation Front is

aware of this. It refuses to engage in forming blocs; its organizational provisions stress collective decision-making, that the front is a temporary framework for struggle and urge the revival of the National Front in the occupied homeland. Most important, these provisions stress the preservation of the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative and leader of the Palestinian people's struggle.»



Land Day rally in Shatila called by the PNSF

Mamoun Al Saed, journalist

«The formation of the Salvation Front was a response to the needs of the current phase of the Palestinian struggle, especially after the convention of the secessionist Amman Council and the subsequent Jordanian-Palestinian accord and the Egyptian initiative. All these moves aimed at broadening the Camp David process and spreading Zionist-imperialist domination, in alliance with Arab reaction.»

Mahmoud Al Khatib, editor of «Al Mithaq» newspaper

«We proclaim our support to the PNSF. Its formation is a qualitative step to confront the qualitative step taken by Arafat towards dealing with the liquidationist US schemes. The formation of this front was a response to the requirements of the present stage, an advanced step towards foiling the course of deviation and its proponents.»

Mustafa Abu Salam, Secretary of the Carpenters Union

«We welcome the formation of the PNSF and are hopeful that it will be a firm popular base for protecting the PLO. We call on everybody to rally around this front to bolster its role, so that it will be able to stand up to the danger of deviation and its proponents.»

Mass organizations

Statements of support to the PNSF came from the following: Yusra Barberi, Secretary of the Women's Union in Gaza; Naji Audeh, Secretary of the Construction Workers Union in Bethlehem; Adnan Zubaidi, Secretary of the Artists League in the West Bank; Khodor al Saed Al M'ranah, Secretary of the Shop

Employees and General Service Workers Union; Younis al Jaru, Secretary of the Lawyers Union in Gaza; Ghassam Abeidat, President of University Graduates in Bethlehem; Gazi al Shestri, Secretary of Workers in Establishments and Crafts in Nablus; Idris Salameh, President of the Workers and Employees Union at Al Mutlah Hospital; Jamil al Tarairy, President of the Workers and Employees Union at Mokassed Hospital; Dr. Issam al Souruna, Secretary of the Doctors Union in Nablus; Imad Al Sulha, Secretary of the Private School Employees Union; Anwar Labbadah, Secretary of the Tailors Union; Mustafa Abu Salam, Secretary of the Carpenters and Upholsterers Union.

Palestinians in Jordan

A statement expressing support to the PNSF was issued on April 7th, signed by 64 persons including members of the PNC residing in Jordan, trade union leaders, writers and journalists.



On the Arab level

The formation of the PNSF was welcomed by a broad spectrum of Arab progressive and nationalist forces. On April 4th, the PNSF received a memorandum signed by 64 unionists and patriotic dignitaries in Oman, expressing their satisfaction with its foundation and support to its platform.

Among the Lebanese parties welcoming the PNSF were those of the National Democratic Front: Kareem M'rueh, Politbureau member of the Lebanese Communist Party, termed the forming of the front «a matter of crucial importance, a necessity that came in time.»

Saed Khawa of the Progressive Socialist Party called the PNSF «a must for the Palestinian people and revolution. It helps to develop a clear national platform and deal with the problem within the Palestinian arena, for the sake of the liberation and return to Palestine.»

Haidar Homaine, leading member of the Arab Baath Socialist Party in Lebanon, stated: «We are all confident that the Salvation Front, having under its command the major forces including the PFLP, is capable of offering a great deal and working with perseverance. Its responsible, continued struggle could mean hastening the time for achieving our long waited goal of defeating the conspiracy and placing the PLO, its masses and resources, on the right track.»

In Syria, President Hafez al Assad hailed PNSF's formation as «the inauguration of fresh revolutionary upsurge, transcending weakness and capitulation.» The Salvation Front also drew the support of the Syrian Communist Party.



Prospects of the Amman Accord

Why we reject the right-wing leadership

Since Arafat signed the Amman accord with King Hussein, events have proven that the Palestinian right wing is determined to continue its deviating course. Faced with overwhelming condemnation, Arafat and his lieutenants made a semblance of backtracking. Arafat tried to avoid admitting that he had endorsed Security Council resolution 242, for he knows this violates repeated PNC resolutions. However, the Jordanian regime had the last word, publicizing the terms of the accord while the Palestinian rightists were still equivocating about its contents. The acting Jordanian information minister confirmed that the accord includes acceptance of 242.

The accord was approved by the PLO Executive Committee formed at the illegal Amman PNC, on condition that it be adopted as a united Arab position. Hiding behind the mantle of 'Arab solidarity', the illegal Executive Committee revealed its true position, for such consensus can only be achieved by breaking the firm position of the nationalist regimes opposed to the imperialist plans, especially Syria. To cover their deviation, this Executive Committee issued a statement decorated with the PLO's adopted positions: an independent state, rejecting 'autonomy', Camp David, the Reagan plan, 242 and any sharing of the PLO's representation.

In another face-saving maneuver, a PLO delegation was sent to Amman in early March to 'amend' the accord. Not only were their proposed amendments insubstantial in the overall context of the accord; King Hussein immediately announced that the accord had not been amended.

In late February, Mubarak of Egypt announced his initiative for pushing the Amman accord forward: a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation to Washington as a prelude to talks with 'Israel', to be sanctified by an international conference. This was met by the criticism of Fatah Central Committee and PLO Executive Committee members. As these protests have not turned into any move to abrogate the Amman accord, it is difficult to take them seriously. After all, it was Mubarak's adviser, Osama al

Baz, who announced the Amman accord in Cairo, after playing a significant role in Arafat and Hussein's talks.

The special danger of the accord is that it is a key element in Arab reaction's efforts to push the Camp David process forward, by reactivating the Reagan plan, establishing the «land for peace» formula for negotiations and in the end imposing the 'autonomy' plan. The Amman accord was timed to coincide with intense Egyptian diplomacy to renew negotiations with the Israelis, at the same time Egyptian, Saudi and Jordanian officials pled for an active US role in reviving the «peace» process.

The dilemma of the Palestinian right

The Amman accord is doubly dangerous because it is being taken seriously by US imperialism and the Labor wing of the Zionist leadership. The latter has been trying to open such avenues for some time now. Influential Israelis have pointed out that the major element in their government no longer opposes the Reagan plan which was originally rejected out of hand by Begin. This does not mean that US imperialism or Zionism is willing to meet King Hussein, much less Arafat, halfway. Rather the enemy has eyed the chance to have the PLO acquiesce in liquidating the Palestinian cause and resolving the Middle East conflict through Israeli-Jordanian negotiations. This is the reason for US Assistant Secretary of State Murphy's touring the region in April, to prepare for his boss Schultz's coming in May. Arafat's meeting with King Hussein and the new Jordanian Prime Minister, just before Murphy's tour, is yet another proof of the right wing's determination to be involved in imperialism's plans.

Yet the equivocation of Arafat and his lieutenants is not all playacting, for they are in a genuine dilemma. To be useful to Arab reaction, they must appear as the legitimate leadership; this means hiding the extent of their concessions from the masses. At the same time, they *must* give these concessions and more to appear acceptable in imperialist eyes. King Hussein is giving

Arafat no leeway for covering his treachery. In reality, the reactionary regimes are trying to corner the PLO. They know full well that the settlement offers nothing to the Palestinian people, and that the US and 'Israel' will refuse to deal with the PLO. This refusal will give the reactionaries the excuse for disposing of the PLO altogether, in order to enter direct negotiations with 'Israel'.

The fallacy of alignment with Arab reaction

By opting for deviation, Arafat and his lieutenants have trapped themselves in Arab reaction's historical dilemma. US imperialism considers 'Israel' its primary, irreplaceable ally in the region; any US solution will resolve the conflict on Zionism's conditions. The US response to the latest overtures of Hussein and Mubarak is a confirmation of this trend. Despite encouraging statements, the Reagan administration continues to propound the age-old formula of direct negotiations to be sure that Zionist occupation is legitimized from the start.

Especially after the defeat of its policy in Lebanon, the Reagan Administration wants Arab reaction to do all the work. When the PLO's role is eliminated, the US will gladly preside over the fait accompli of negotiations. The Zionists adhere to the same tactic. As stated by Abba Eban, former Israeli foreign minister, now influential MK, «It is up to President Mubarak and King Hussein to grapple with the problem of forming a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation with which Washington and Jerusalem would find it possible to hold dialogue» (New York Times, March 17th).

Murphy's visit- Trapping the PLO

In his mid-April tour of the area, Murphy conveyed the US conditions for discussions with any Palestinian-Jordanian delegation: A PLO-Jordanian delegation is acceptable if the PLO accepts 242, 338 and explicitly recognizes 'Israel'. Otherwise, Palestinians in the delegation must not be PLO members, representing or delegated by the PLO.

What the US really wants is assurances that it will not be a PLO delegation: «We are counting on Arafat not endorsing 242», said a State Department official (*Middle East Policy Survey*, April 5). To sound out the precedent of a non-PLO delegation, Murphy met a group of about 40 West Bank Palestinians. More than 100 nationalist personalities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip condemned this meeting, calling for a boycott and emphasizing that anyone attending violates the will of the Palestinian people, for the US only aims to eliminate the Palestinian cause. Unfortunately, some of those who did attend have been considered part of the nationalist, pro-PLO ranks. Their attendance shows the confusing and divisive effect of Arafat's right-wing line on our people under occupation.

Murphy's visit precipitated new problems for the deviating Palestinian leadership. The Jordanian Prime Minister demanded a clear-cut written answer to the US conditions, to be delivered by Abu Iyad and Farouq Qaddoumi, or there will be problems in the PLO-Jordanian relations. Since these two are known for their criticism of the Amman accord, this is the regime's way of cornering Arafat. The Executive Committee meeting in Baghdad in mid-April was reported to be explosive, pitting Arafat and Hani Hassan against those who want to retain a role for the PLO. The official decision was to participate in a joint delegation only as the PLO and without recognizing 'Israel'. Yet a few days later in a radio interview, Hani Hassan termed the Murphy plan a positive advance; he said that the Palestinian delegation can be independents and that all Fatah accepts the Amman accord. Thus, from now until Schultz's visit is the final chance for those in Fatah's Central Committee, who profess adherence to the PLO's national role, to break with the deviating line.

Because of the anticipated mass reaction, the Palestinian right is careful not to reveal the depth of its deviation in public statements. However, there are indications that in their defeatism, they have opted for some kind of 'autonomy' plan, long ago rejected by our masses, as the only feasible solution. In the last issue of *Palestinian Affairs*, the PLO Research Center's journal, Sabri Jiryis provided the «theoretical» background for why such thoughts are now entertained. He basically concluded that the results of the 1982 Zionist invasion of Lebanon were a favor for the PLO: They

freed it of the armed struggle, «Syrian pressure» and internal opposition. Accordingly, the 17th PNC in Amman was the best of all sessions. With such arguments in print, we hardly need polemics as to how the right-wing bourgeoisie is incapable of continuing the Palestinian revolution.

«Land for Peace» means «autonomy»

The Jordanian and, before it, the Egyptian regime launched the «land for peace» formula because of their class need for reactionary stability in the area. The Palestinian right has now followed suit, because its own class nature renders it incapable of continuing the national struggle. Due to the right-wing's attempt to cover its real intention, it is necessary to examine this formula to see how it links up with the 'autonomy' plan.

Of course, the basic fallacy of this formula is that it reduces the Palestinian cause and Middle East conflict to border questions, when in reality it is a struggle for the Palestinian people's very existence and nationhood. More broadly, it is a struggle over whether imperialism will succeed in dominating the area totally and perpetuating its forward base, 'Israel'.

Having said this, let us deal with the details of the «land for peace» formula. The Palestinian and Arab right are wagering on Labor's premiership in the Israeli government, so let us look at Labor Zionism's version of «land for peace» as it was outlined in the plan of Allon, foreign minister in the 1970s. While this plan was never officially adopted by the Israeli government, it did serve as Labor's guide in establishing 76 settlements in the 1967 occupied territories, and the encirclement of Jerusalem with Jews-only suburbs, up till 1977. Among these settlements are Maale Adumin and Kiryat Arba. Today these two compromise over one-half the total number of settlers in the West Bank. They combine the two demographic ingredients needed for permanent Zionist control: Maale Adumin is an urban center, attracting 'non-ideological' Jews who need cheaper housing and thus gain material interests in retaining the West Bank. Kiryat Arba is infamous as the home of the ultra-aggressive and expansionist-minded settlers whose terror attacks aim to empty the West Bank of the Palestinians, paving the way for annexation. In this light, it is

ironic that Labor is viewed as willing to exchange land for peace. Allon, like so many Israeli politicians, started his career in the military. His plan was designed to meet «defense» needs, i.e. plans for strategic control of land and water resources, outlining 'concessions' that would not impede these priorities.

While the Jordanian regime pretends that 242 means exchanging total peace for total land, the Zionists have a different interpretation. Zalman Shoval, former MK and aide to Moshe Dayan, has pointed out the wording of 242: «Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict» and not, as he notes, «the forces» or «the territories»: «In other words, while the resolution does indeed call for withdrawal of Israeli forces from 'territories' it does not indicate which or how many forces or which territories...there will be a withdrawal of forces-but only insofar as this does not make the boundaries insecure...Israel-also in accordance with 242-could 'withdraw armed forces' from areas not vital to its security and redeploy them in military camps» (*Jerusalem Post*, March 24th).

Thus, 242 does not contradict the 'autonomy' plan. Cabinet minister Ezer Weizman has stated that 242 is not a formula for trading land against peace, but for sharing the administration, as perceived in the 'autonomy' plan. To *Newsweek* (November 26, 1984), Weizman, a veteran of Israeli-Egyptian relations and billed as «understanding» towards the Arabs, stated: «I will stick to the autonomy formula we accepted at Camp David. I don't want the West Bank and Gaza annexed to Israel, and I don't believe in territorial compromise with Jordan.» Prime Minister Peres has said that 'autonomy' is the first topic on the agenda in future negotiations with Jordan. On March 21st, Defense Minister Rabin told the other side of this story: He assured settlers in the Gaza Strip that the territory «must remain an inseparable part of the State of Israel». In the light of all this, it is difficult to see the great difference between Labor policy and Begin's «autonomy for the people not the land».

Regardless of these realities, the Palestinian right endorsed the «land for peace» formula and all its anticipated consequences, trying to drag the PLO into Arab reaction's wagering on the Labor Zionist policy and US imperialism. There is an objective reason why the Palestinian and Arab right fall prey to such illusions: Their class nature pre-

vents them from mobilizing a counter-force to years of Zionist aggression. Thus, the Palestinian right-wing was truly defeated in Beirut, while the revolutionary forces in the Palestinian resistance joined Lebanese revolutionaries to show the way to engulf

the Zionist and imperialist plans in a crisis, by armed struggle and people's war. This is why we reject the right-wing leadership, and this is the reason for the formation of the Palestine National Salvation Front.

Bethlehem Student Elections

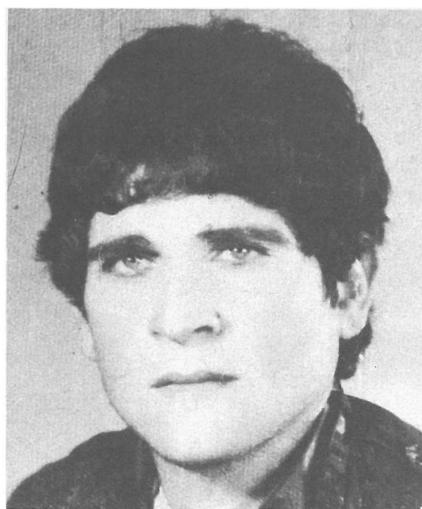
On May 8th, students at Bethlehem University in the occupied West Bank, elected a new Administrative Committee to head their Student Council. Coming at this critical time, the elections were a test of how much support the different political forces enjoy among Palestinian students.

Three lists of candidates contested the elections: (1) The Progressive Student Front, an election coalition between the Progressive Student Action Front which supports the political line of the PFLP, and Progressive Union of Students which supports the line of the Palestinian Communist Party. The Palestinian National Union, representing forces now included in the Palestine National Salvation Front, gave their votes to this list without themselves field-

ing candidates. (2) The Youth List representing the political line of Fatah's right-wing. Also joining this election coalition was the Students Union which adheres to the political line of the DFLP. (3) The Islamic List, contesting elections at Bethlehem University for the first time.

The elections gave an overwhelming mandate to the progressive forces. Candidates of the Progressive Student Front won six of nine seats in the Administrative Committee, including the chairmanship which was won by Ahmed Jeradat. Fatah's right wing gained two seats, while the Islamic List gained one. Clearly the students at Bethlehem say no to deviation and see the progressive forces as the key to advancing the Palestinian cause.

Military Operations in Palestine



Martyred militant Fadi Gharbawi

On April 18, a PFLP unit, operating in occupied Palestine, attacked two Israeli soldiers in Gaza. One of the soldiers was shot and seriously injured, while the other shot and killed one of our freedom fighters. Our martyred comrade, Fadi Gharbawi, was born in Breij camp in the Gaza Strip. Since joining the PFLP in 1971, he had been imprisoned

five times. After the operation, the Israeli occupation forces blew up his home.

On April 25, a PFLP unit operating in occupied Palestine, detonated an explosion at Tel Aviv police headquarters, causing a number of casualties. Israeli Radio admitted only one policeman injured.

On April 28, a PFLP unit, named after the martyr Fadi Gharbawi, attacked an Israeli patrol in northern Palestine, near the Jordanian border. The unit destroyed an enemy tank with RPGs. Israeli forces besieged the area, while the Jordanian army tried, without success, to track down the freedom fighters.

In early May a settler was stabbed in Gaza. Israeli sources claimed him to be a civilian, but he was actually a Mossad agent, and for this reason selected as a target by Palestinian freedom fighters.

On May 6th, a PFLP unit operating in the occupied territories detonated by remote control an explosion near Qalqilia. The explosion targeted a Zionist convoy taking settlers to the West Bank, causing many casualties.

Protecting Palestinian Rights in Lebanon

In early May, the PNSF sent a high-level delegation to Beirut. Through a series of meetings with the Palestinian masses and Lebanese nationalists, the delegation began an initiative to improve the situation for Palestinians in Lebanon, a task long neglected by the PLO due to its internal crisis and right-wing dominance.

The delegation held mass meetings in Sabra, Shatila, Bourj al Barajneh and Mar Elias camps, and spoke in detail with Palestinian mass organizations and unions on the people's problems, especially security and lack of work. This is the first step towards the PNSF forming committees in the camps to promote security, political activities, social welfare and job opportunities. Such committees will work in close coordination with the existing popular committees and do all in their power to avert any inter-Palestinian conflict due to PLO divisions.

The delegation met with the Lebanese National Democratic Front to discuss all aspects of Palestinian affairs in Lebanon. The NDF affirmed its commitment that Lebanon is an arena for all activities of the Palestinian revolution, but that this should not take the form it had prior to 1982. There was agreement that at least one top Palestinian official should be permanently stationed in Beirut to insure closest coordination of these matters.

A thorough discussion was held with Nabih Berri of the Amal movement, where he agreed on the Palestinians' political, social and organizing rights in the camps.

A positive meeting was held with Prime Minister Karami and Education Minister Hoss; both expressed willingness for the government to facilitate matters for Palestinians residing in Lebanon, such as passport renewal and repealing the law passed in 1983 which excluded Palestinians from most decent job opportunities.

In these and other meetings with Lebanese nationalists, the PNSF was accorded recognition as the party concerned with Palestinian affairs in Lebanon, and for strengthening Palestinian-Lebanese nationalist ties. For the PNSF, this is only the first step in a major effort to protect the rights of Palestinians in Lebanon and further the joint struggle with Lebanese revolutionaries.

Palestinian Women Boycott the Right Wing

Against a background of conflict and division characterizing the Palestinian arena, involving the nationalist forces on the one hand, and representatives of the deviationist trend on the other, preparations have been under way for holding an illegal conference of the General Union of Palestinian Women, in Tunis on 30 April, 1985. In view of the necessity to safeguard our mass organizations and their nationalist role as one of the bases of the Palestinian Revolution, we stress the following:

1-Holding such a conference on unsound organizational bases under the present political circumstances dominated by political division and squander resulting from the policies of the right-wing PLO leadership, makes it impossible for the General Union of Palestinian Women to remain united and preserve its nationalist line.

2-The fact that, in various meetings of the General Secretariat and Administrative Council of the Union, the right-wing representatives refused to stand with the Union in rejecting King Hussein's proposal (land in exchange for peace), or denouncing the Hussein-Arafat accord, is a proof of the right-wing's insistence on diverting the militant line of the Union.

3-We consider that the intention of the right-wing PLO leadership, which has relinquished the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including the PLO's right to be the sole representative of the Palestinian people, is to bring about, through this conference, a statement which would support its deviationist line.

4-The right-wing line of deviation was expressed in organizational procedures, which transgressed the internal regulations of the Union on both the leadership and grass-roots level. This was clear during the illegal session of the Palestine National Council in Amman, when an arbitrary decision was taken to strip a large number of the Women's Union members of their membership. Other transgressions included bypassing the basic regular procedure, which

Text of the press release issued by members of the General Secretariat, the Administrative Council and representatives of the General Union of Palestinian Women boycotting the illegal conference to be held in Tunis on 30 April, 1985.



demands that the Union branches necessarily hold their local conferences and elect their representatives to the general conference, before the latter can convene. In the same way, membership lists of representatives of certain branches have been arbitrarily increased with the addition of new names. This procedure and others clearly represent serious constitutional offences, which jeopardize the legitimacy of the conference.

5-In spite of the decision by a number of political forces and members of the Union's General Secretariat, including the Secretary-General herself, members of the Administrative Council and branches, to boycott the coming conference, in spite of the great and sincere efforts exerted by leading members of the Union and friendly Arab and international women's unions to warn the right-wing against the dangerous consequences of such a conference, the right-wing persisted in going ahead with their plan, thus proving their intention to undermine the achievements realized by the Women's Union through long years of militancy.

6-Considering the above points, and motivated by a deep concern for safeguarding the unity of the Union and its militant goals, we declare our intention to boycott the coming conference, and demand instead that it convene on sound political and organizational bases, which would guarantee the Union's nationalist line. A line which would continue to defend the Palestinian National Charter, its political programme, as well as our people's national legitimate rights, including the right to return, enjoy self-determination and establish an independent state, on the whole national soil of Palestine.

7-Declaring our intention to withhold our participation in this conference, we remain confident that our Palestinian sisters in general, and our comrades in the Union in particular, will help preserve the Palestinian woman's militant role within an active, united, nationalist context. This is of special importance this year, as 1985 happens to be the 20th anniversary of the establishment of our Union, whose nationalist, anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist and anti-reactionary line we pledge to defend and continue to protect.

8-We appeal to friendly and sisterly women's unions to support our demand that this conference be postponed, in order for the General Union of Palestinian Women to preserve its unity and militant line.

Union members boycotting the Tunis conference:

General Secretariat: Jehan Helou-International Relations Officer; Samira Salah-Arab Relations Officer; Siham Rahal-Information Officer & Treasurer. Administrative Council: Samira Jibril, Laila Khaled, Rasmia Oudeh, Nuweirah Dajani, Bushra Hamid, Adiba Jafawi, Mora Jaber.

Union branches boycotting: Syria; Libya; most members in Kuwait, Lebanon, the occupied territories and Jordan; members in Qatar. (The branches in Iraq and the USA are illegal.)

Hunger Strikes

The hunger strikes waged by Palestinian prisoners in Zionist jails from late February until April 5th, exhibited a high degree of coordination. This existed not only among the political prisoners who initiated and sustained the strike in Askelon, but from prison to prison, and between the prisoners, their relatives and supporters outside.

On February 22nd, 500 Palestinian prisoners in Askelon (along Palestine's southern coast) initiated a partial hunger strike, accepting only tea and bread. Thus they prepared for an extended confrontation with the prison authorities, leaving open the possibility of a total hunger strike, if their demands were not taken seriously. Their demands were those of all political prisoners in Zionist jails: improvement of living conditions and medical service, and a stop to arbitrary searches which the guards use to harass and attack the prisoners. Among the strikers at Askelon, 148 have been seriously ill for years. In view of the Zionist prison policy, they knew that they would not get their demands totally or at once, but that without struggle, conditions could only get worse.

In the first part of March, Palestinian political prisoners in Hebron, Jnайд (Nablus), Nafha (the Naqab), Damoun (Haifa), and Gaza Central Prison staged

strikes in solidarity with the Askelon militants. In some cases, the solidarity strikes also had a background in particular events at that prison. For example, in Damoun, prisoners declared a strike immediately after they had been stripped and beaten by guards supposedly searching for political material. In addition to protesting this assault, the prisoners demanded that young Palestinian detainees be housed with the other political prisoners and not in the criminal section, where they are subjected to added harassment and attempts at corruption by Jewish criminal prisoners. They also protested the detention of 23 «security» prisoners in small cells. The warden ceded to their demands verbally after four days of the strike, but his promises were not fulfilled, so the strike resumed, joining the others.

Mothers lead solidarity

Women have long been prominent in organizing solidarity with political prisoners. This time, relatives of the strikers played an especially sustained role. A sit-in began in the International Red Cross office in Jerusalem, almost simultaneously with the Askelon strike. Then mothers began to sit-in at the Red Cross office in Gaza where many of the prisoners' families live. By late March, the

Jerusalem IRC office closed, claiming it impossible to work with the sit-in going on, but the mothers continued by camping outside. On March 25th, 300 relatives and supporters gathered in Jerusalem to protest the prison authorities' refusal to meet the strikers' demands. Speakers at the rally included mothers of prisoners, unionists, student council representatives and the head of the Higher Islamic Council.

On April 1st, progressive Israeli women demonstrated at the Prison Service Authority office in Jerusalem and were joined by the mothers of the sit-in. On April 4th, East Jerusalem closed down in solidarity with the political prisoners. A large solidarity meeting was held in Ibrahimiyeh College and violently disrupted by the Zionist forces who fired machineguns and tear gas. Many students were seriously injured, 132 arrested and enormous damage done to educational facilities.

A victory

The prisoners' persistence and the widespread solidarity evidently had their effect on the newly appointed Prison Service director who needed to defuse tension in the prisons. After 41 days, the Askelon prisoners ended their strike when the authorities promised to meet a whole series of their demands. If this is implemented, it signals a victory, setting an example for the possibility of improving the conditions of other political prisoners by struggle.

Operation Galilee

Liberated in «Operation Galilee» which reduced the number of political prisoners in Zionist jails by almost one-third



Experience of Imprisonment and Struggle

Yacoub Dawani was born in Nablus, Palestine. While still a student, he joined the Arab Nationalist Movement, the precursor of the PFLP. He was among those cadres assigned to its military wing, to prepare for the struggle to liberate Palestine. When the Zionists occupied the West Bank in 1967, Yacoub left his economics study in Cairo, to return to Palestine and engage in the anti-occupation resistance. He was part of a larger group working to create local cells, to further political mass activities, underground propaganda and armed resistance. Yacoub remembers, «Our experience was little, but our morale was high. Perhaps in our enthusiasm, we were not strict enough about security. Most of us were young, men and women, mostly students, but also some workers and peasants.»

Members of the group were arrested and the others wanted. Yacoub tried to go underground, but was arrested in October 1968. For fifty days he was interrogated and tortured heavily in the Nablus prison. He was then transferred to Ramle and kept in isolation for six months, then returned to Nablus and tried in February 1970, by a military court. He was defended by the progressive Israeli lawyer, Felicia Langer; together they aimed to prolong the trial as much as possible, to give a chance to speak out on the Palestinian cause. Yacoub asked us to include a special tribute to Felicia Langer, and to Lea Tsemel who was later also his lawyer, for the great efforts they have expended on behalf of thousands of Palestinian detainees.

Yacoub was sentenced to life imprisonment, plus 18 years, to be served concurrently, for membership in an illegal organization, possession of arms, receiving military training, and having relations with a Palestinian in 'Israel' for the purpose of endangering state security. He began serving his term in Ramle, was transferred to Askelon in 1970, to Bir Sheeba (the Naqab) in 1973, to Tulkarm in 1978, to Nafha in 1980, to Tulkarm in 1983, and finally released in the November 1983 prisoner exchange.

In this interview we decided not to deal with the question of torture in depth, for it has been documented in many places, but rather to focus on the conditions and experience of struggle in Zionist prisons.

How were conditions in the Zionist prisons at the time you entered, as compared to today?

I will begin with some basic facts: Overcrowding has always been a problem. Imagine a corridor-like cell of 30 sq.meters, including a water tap and toilet, where 20 prisoners sleep, eat, wash, etc. Their mattresses alone cover the space. This is today after much struggle. Until 1977, there were no mattresses, only four blankets per prisoner. Only in 1981 were bunk beds instated in some jails in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Now prisoners have only a two hour walk in the prison yard as relief. When I entered the prisons, this was only one hour, sometimes less.

Originally there were two different menus in the Zionist prisons, one for Israeli common prisoners, another for Palestinians. The stated pretext was that their taste was occidental, while ours was oriental. In reality, Palestinians received much less protein and vegetables. Fruit was first introduced, in theory, in 1972. Our diet was mainly starches. Starting in 1981, a single menu was instated, again in theory, for the food given to political prisoners is still less and worse. This aims to weaken them, providing less nourishment and making them lose appetite. Food is served in a degrading way, on the floor where we also slept, walked, etc. Meeting basic needs in a primitive way is part of the Zionist dehumanization process, to have the prisoners lose their self-respect. Even meals become a daily provocation, a form of torture.

When I entered the prison, there were virtually no reading materials. There was only *Al Anba** and a few books, mainly on religion or cheap novels which the Red Cross had convinced the Israelis to allow. Later we were 'allowed' *The Jerusalem Post*. Only after hunger strikes were we allowed to receive books from our families. Only after a hunger strike in Nafha prison in 1981, were we permitted the daily Israeli papers (Hebrew). Of course, books are subject to censorship. In addition to the thousands banned in the 1967 occupied territories, many legal books are held back by the prison authorities. Until now, an important demand of any prison struggle is the right to receive any book that is legally distributed in occupied Palestine. Radios are still forbidden, but they are often smuggled in. Prisoners are 'allowed', i.e. forced, to hear three hours of Israeli Radio (Arabic program) daily.

War of Attrition

All these details of prison life add up to a hellish war of attrition waged by the prison authorities. The prisoner is forced to struggle for every little thing; it is hoped that he will wear himself down in this way. Added to the practice of systematic torture, the living conditions in the prison are geared to reduce the prisoner to a nothing. In 1969, Moshe Dayan 'explained' to the Knesset why the death penalty was not necessary: His logic was to deprive the Palestinians of the chance to have martyrs in the prisons, while making sure that the political prisoners would be turned into «Swiss cheese»-more holes than cheese.

In this context, one sees the perspective of the prisoners' struggle for just the minimal conditions. Fighting to preserve their humanity is a form of resistance, to thwart the destructive aim of the prison service. In 1980, at the end of the prolonged Nafha hunger strike, we were visited in our cell by an Israeli doctor, who noted that Palestinians were kept in conditions unsuitable for animals. He asked why we were not in worse

**Al Anba* was an Arabic daily published by the Israeli government. Its closure earlier this year proved that it never became popular among Palestinians despite the facilities it enjoyed, especially as compared to the Palestinian press under occupation.

shape than that we were. We answered that we survived on our morale and collective solidarity.

Prisoners Fight Back

In the first years, the guards' violence was rampant. I remember how in Askelon a prisoner could be beaten for any or no reason. In 1971, a guard kicked a blind prisoner to wake him up. Two comrades were provoked to insult the guard and push him out of the cell. Then other guards came with sticks and tear gas; they took the two comrades and beat them in the courtyard. This led other prisoners to beat on their cell doors and shout protests and slogans of resistance. Two hours later, 400 guards and soldiers were called in to calm the disturbance, armed with tear gas and clubs. They beat every prisoner, systematically, cell by cell.

The prisoners began to defend themselves against the guards' violence, first spontaneously, then collectively. After real clashes with the guards, there were orders not to beat a prisoner in the presence of others. Of course, the prisoners can never win this battle, but they can keep the situation explosive for the prison authorities. Today, the prison authorities are more selective; they choose the target and circumstances. It would take hundreds of guards to beat all the prisoners, and this elicits revolt. Now they usually single out the most militant; beatings usually occur in solitary cells or in the trucks used for transferring the prisoners, blindfolded and chained. Sometimes a whole group of prisoners are taken to another prison to be beaten. This practice started after prisoners later attacked the guard who had beaten them. In 1975, after a protest in Bir Sheeba, those who had articulated the prisoners' demands to the administration were taken for a 'ride'. For five hours, they were driven around South Palestine, stopped at kibbutzim and beaten. The two prisoners, who were murdered on the 7th day of the 1980 hunger strike in Nafha, died from being beaten in the attempt to force-feed them; nine others were injured and had to be hospitalized. Beating is still one of the most used disciplinary measures, especially against the most active.



«Operation Galilee»

PFLP-General Command skillfully conducted protracted negotiations which forced the Israelis to free 1150 political prisoners in exchange for 3 captured Israeli soldiers.

How was the mood among the political prisoners when you entered the jails?

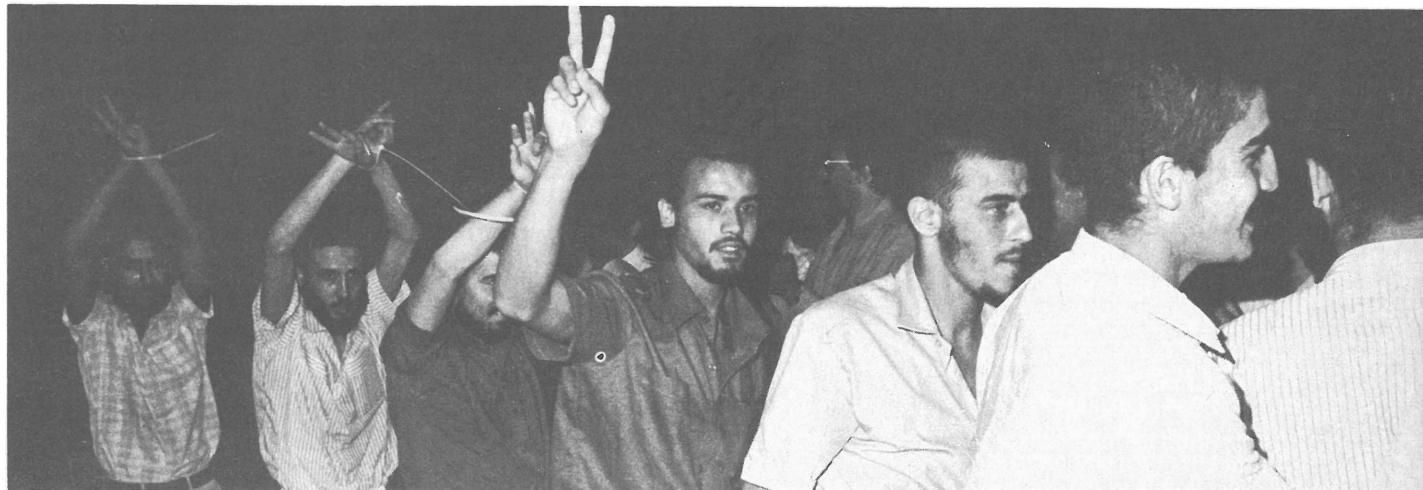
It was that of the Palestinian resistance in general at the time: full of patriotism and romantic ideas of heroism. People were very optimistic; they did not think they would stay long in prison, for the revolution would soon be victorious. Of course, there was also a sense of disappointment because of being deprived of freedom of action, but everyone felt they would have another chance. Political education was rather low, though there was great consciousness of the necessity of fighting the enemy and liberating our land.

There were some prisoners with long political and organizational experience. In the first years, they contributed a lot to raise the need for more political knowledge. This would have happened anyway, for the political prisoners felt their shortcomings and would have eventually been motivated by their own experience, but the process was quicker because of these vanguards.

«Operation Galilee» Liberated prisoners welcomed in the Bekaa Valley, Lebanon.



At first people thought most of arranging their everyday life and relations with others; how to react to the prison service policy and improve their living conditions. Gradually, with increased political knowledge and experience, the prisoners began to feel the need for solid organization among themselves. All the resistance organizations engaged in this process, but the PFLP was most advanced in this field due to our larger proportion of prisoners with extensive political and organizational background. In 1968, our comrades had a clandestine newsletter in the prison, though we suffered from lack of paper and pencils, the problems of smuggling it from cell to cell, section to section, etc.



Prisoners liberated at Quneitra, Syria - Operation Galilee

The concept developed of electing committees for certain duties, and to represent the prisoners before the prison authorities. In the years 1971-73, Kfar Youna prison (near Tulkarm) was a vanguard experience in this respect. There were meetings, elected leadership, organizational discipline, criticism and self-criticism, political study and organized contact to the outside, plus well-organized actions against the prison authorities. This encompassed prisoners from all the resistance organizations. In 1973, during a disobedience strike, all the Kfar Youna prisoners were transferred to the prison at Bir Sheeba, along with some prisoners from Askelon. Thus Bir Sheeba became a melting pot for experience from different prisons.

In these years the political prisoners came to really feel and act as such: having representatives to speak collectively, not individually, courageous struggles, and struggles with a clear political content, such as refusing to work. All this countered the Israeli practice of treating us as individuals and common prisoners, for the status of a political prisoner is different in terms of rights and duties.

The Israelis made new efforts to break the political prisoners via worsening living conditions and implanting agents in the prisons, to provoke quarrels and break solidarity. As a result, the prisoners acquired a greater sense of security matters; we developed our own 'security network' and were able to isolate suspects and sometimes even liquidate persons involved in serious collaboration.

The concept of Nafha

In the context of the prison authorities' failure to break the political prisoners, the concept of Nafha was born. The prison service wanted a jail with the hardest possible conditions and maltreatment for the most active militants.

From our first days at Nafha (1980), we prepared for a hunger strike, because we felt that if the prison continued in this way, it would become a model for other prisons. Treatment and living conditions were back to the severe level of 1967. All our acquired rights, the concessions extracted by struggle, were denied. If the Israelis had succeeded at Nafha, they could build several prisons on this model, transferring successive groups of prisoners to be 'softened', then returned to the larger prisons. So, 75 days after Nafha opened, we initiated a hunger strike with daring demands for total change in the living conditions, including changing the physical structure, enlarging the small windows and courtyard, having a dining room, beds,

decent sanitary facilities, the same food and treatment as Israeli prisoners. We demanded bimonthly not monthly family visits, radios, newspapers and magazines; many of the things we demanded were lacking in other prisons as well.

Would you evaluate the hunger strike as a weapon?

An open-ended hunger strike, win or die, is the prisoners' best weapon, but it must be used carefully to keep it sharp. If an open-ended hunger strike is unsuccessful, it will take a long time to rally fellow prisoners to such a struggle again. The hunger strike is a strategic weapon and should be used in a situation where it can be maximally effective. The hunger strike waged this year in Askelon and other prisons was partial, taking only bread and tea. This had the purpose of prolonging and spreading the strike as much as possible.

Would you describe the relation between the struggle in the prison and the overall struggle of the Palestinian people?

Political prisoners are part of the resistance movement, having their own battle inside the jails according to the concrete conditions. In fact, the Israeli prisons where Palestinians are held have become higher institutes of political and organizational learning; they are a place for measuring the potential energies of the person. Now, a large number of the most active militants in the resistance, especially in the occupied territories, are prison graduates. Inside, resistance is the only way to keep hold of oneself; otherwise you will break, even physically. One can see how morale, political motivation and integrity affect the health of the prisoner.

Al Faraa

Zionist Torture Factory

After mounting exposure of the horrible conditions at Al Faraa detention center near Nablus, the Israeli army finally opened it to inspection by foreign journalists in early April. For the occasion, Al Faraa had been temporarily «cleaned up»: «From the guided tour and brief conversations with some of the inmates, it was impossible to verify the accuracy of the assertions made in January by the International Commission of Jurists», wrote Edward Walsh of the Washington Post Service (*International Herald Tribune*, April 11). This show enacted by the Israelis, added to the recent hunger strikes in other Zionist jails, highlights the need for further campaigns to expose Zionist torture. The Israeli authorities cannot be allowed to slip off the hook so easily; maltreatment at Al Faraa has been extensively reported and documented. Below is some material we had prepared for our last issue, but were forced to postpone for reasons of space. We think it has added relevance now in view of the Zionist cover-up.

Breaking the morale of youth

The basic point about Al Faraa is that the detainees are youth, sometimes only children. They are picked up on the street at random in connection with demonstrations and stonethrowing, without their parents being informed.

Often they are victims of «preventive» detention, as when the Israeli authorities rounded up over 200 West Bank youth in the week preceding Land Day, hoping to forestall demonstrations. In Al Faraa, they are interrogated by the Israeli army before being turned over to courts in the West Bank. This situation leaves much leeway for abuse, and Al Faraa has been described as a concentration camp and factory for producing confessions. Considering the youth of the detainees and the ugly methods used, Al Faraa is part of the calculated Zionist plan for destroying the younger generation of Palestinians under occupation, for their energy and consciousness will fuel our people's national identity and struggle for years to come.

It is no coincidence that Al Faraa was opened in January 1982, on the recommendation of then Chief of Staff Raphael Eitan. In the same period, the Zionist leadership was putting the finishing touches on the plan to invade Lebanon, destroy the PLO, and thereby break the united will of our people under occupation, to allow for eventual annexation of the occupied territories. The torture in Al Faraa is one aspect of the plan, as is the terror of armed settlers who seek to frighten our people into leaving Palestine. In this perspective, defending the Al Faraa detainees is not only a humanitarian duty, but a necessary support to our

masses' continued resistance to occupation.

In January 1984, the Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails received two reports from occupied Palestine about conditions in Al Faraa. These reveal an ugly, sophisticated system for breaking down the morale of youthful detainees, relying on collaborators and homosexual rape. Below, we summarize one of the reports:

Al Faraa is divided into two blocks. The first is for newly arrived prisoners. The second is for those who have already been severely tortured, some of whom confessed under the cruelty of the military and intelligence officers. In addition, members of Kahane's fascist Kach party and other ultraright settlers have been invited to join in the harassment of the detainees.

Block 1: «The Stable»

Here there is no access for visitors, lawyers or Red Cross officials. Block 1 is composed of solitary confinement cells, yet three to four detainees are placed in each. Prisoners are forbidden to speak or move about; infractions are immediately punished by beatings. On an average, the prisoner remains here for 18-40 days. Those detainees who resist torture and refuse to confess stay the longest.

In block 1 there are two soldiers and several collaborators. The latter are said to be janitors, but their real duty is harassing the detainees and raping them; they have keys to the cells, allowing them to terrorize the detainees round the

Prisoners' paintings were on display to greet newly liberated comrades in Libya.



clock. The collaborators take the targeted youth from the cell into the bathroom where he is tied and his head covered with a sheet. Then he is stripped and gang raped. This is done just before interrogation, so the detainee is under the impression that those raping him are his interrogators. Thus the detainee is already shaken up when taken to interrogation. There he is beaten and humiliated in an attempt to get him to confess to taking part in a demonstration, naming other activists, etc. The interrogators tell the detainee that they know he has been raped by a man, and remind him of the society's attitude toward homosexuality. They threaten to inform his parents and friends of the «deviation», and promise relief only if he confesses. The detainee who refuses to cooperate is returned to the solitary confinement cell, and the same cruel method may be repeated over and over. Several detainees have tried to commit suicide by swallowing sharp objects, to escape this cycle of terror. Others are afflicted by hysteria.

The detainee who confesses is beaten less, but homosexual rape may continue, to corrupt him completely. The interrogator poses as a friend, at times scolding the collaborators for harrassing the detainee and ordering increases in his food rations. At this point, the detainee is transferred to block 2.

Block 2

Block 2 consists of larger cells with 15-20 prisoners in each. In comparison with block 1, there is some freedom of movement, but the atmosphere is poisoned by the presence of professional collaborators who supervise the prisoners. Trust between the detainees can be difficult after the experience of block 1, and the fact that some confessed under torture, while others resisted. The aim of the Zionists is to create disputes among the prisoners. Reading materials and radios are forbidden. However, the prisoners are allowed two hours in the courtyard daily, as well as biweekly family visits. Lawyers can only meet their client in the courtyard, while Red Cross officials meet the prisoners in a specially prepared room outside the camp.

Indictment of Israeli torture

Almost since Al Faraa opened, progressive lawyers have been trying to help the youthful detainees. Felicia Langer in particular has filed numerous

protests with the Israeli authorities, based on carefully documented cases of torture. Such efforts culminated in a report released by the International Commission of Jurists in Geneva, in January of this year. This report lists numerous instances of mistreatment ranging from sleep deprivation to beating with an electric cable. It states that the center seems aimed at humiliation and intimidation, rather than obtaining specific information. This report branded

Al Faraa as a center for torture where confessions are manufactured, and as part of Israeli efforts to control the West Bank population. It is this that finally forced the Zionist authorities to open Al Faraa to journalists. Yet what they saw does not correspond to the hell which youthful Palestinians are living in Al Faraa. Therefore, the struggle goes on to defend our youth from this attempt to deprive them of their humanity and national consciousness. ●

Art From Behind the Bars

In April, there was an exhibition of paintings made by Palestinian prisoners in Zionist jails. On display at the Soviet Cultural Center in Damascus, were works by Mohammed Rekoi, Zuhdi Adawi, Mahmoud Affani, Ali Najjar and Mohammed Abu Kerch. These are a unique achievement in the Palestinian arts movement, produced under difficult conditions and suffering. In this case, the studio is the narrow cells of the Zionist prisons, with severely limited field of vision and body movement. The richness and details of the outside world, so very important in the creative process, are missing.

The effects of these conditions are clearly seen in the paintings. From the narrowness of their internal world, these artists have widened their painted world. The small paintings, made on handkerchiefs smuggled to and from the prison, are full of symbols, motifs and details. They convey the impression of a crowded, busy life, which is missing in the sterile confines of the prison. The process of evoking and recording such lively details aims at striking a balance between the external and internal world.

What exists becomes enlivened in the imagination; what is absent is recalled. In the creative process, the prisoners' memory and imagination develop to replace the absent details of the external world. The motives in the paintings are thus the result of returning to the past, as well as envisioning the future based on the prisoners' ideological convictions. Input also comes from the scant reading material available, the prisoners' own comradeship and meetings, and visits from relatives who bring news of their people's struggle and suffering inside and outside occupied Palestine. The paintings also reflect the hardness and aggression experienced in the prison, as well as the happy moments stolen by the prisoners from the slow-moving time.

The paintings exhibit a marked merging between subjective and objective aspects of reality. In the case of long imprisonment, the prisoner is separated from his/her prior daily life. Subjective input is minimal due to the sterility of prison life, being derived instead from memory or visions of the future. At this point, what is personal merges with what is general and objective, and the aims of the struggle for which the prisoners have sacrificed so much occupy a prominent place in their works of art. Most of the paintings depict the gun or other motives showing the continuation of the revolution. Clear, strong symbols express the longing for freedom. The child is used to symbolize the future of the revolution. The woman is important as a symbol for the land, fertility and generosity. In these paintings the woman represents the missing part; the repetition of this symbol provides a balance. Yet the woman does not always appear strictly as a symbol, but also as mother, wife, lover, and fellow struggler. ●



The Iron Fist

The Israeli flight to their «security zone» in South Lebanon was covered by the «iron fist». From mid-February until late April when they left Sour, hardly a day passed without a southern village being besieged. The most typical days witnessed multiple attacks on civilians, dozens indiscriminately shot and up to one hundred arrested, while homes were blown up. In early March, Jebal Amal hospital in Sour, itself raided several times with patients snatched from surgery or donating blood, reported that 80% of its cases were a result of the Zionist «iron fist» policy. In March alone, the Zionist occupiers murdered at least 120 southerners, including 11 killed by a bomb they planted in Maarakeh's mosque. This is in addition to the victims of four Israeli air strikes on Western Lebanon in the same period, and almost 100 civilians killed by car bombs planted by Zionist and CIA agents in West Beirut.

This brutality did not stunt the Lebanese National Resistance however. Anti-occupation operations averaged five daily throughout the first two phases of the withdrawal. Most typical was the response of a South Lebanese woman while mourning her brother: «They killed my brother because he was in the resistance, but I am going to replace him. I have hands, legs and the heart of a hundred men.» Since the withdrawal decision, about 30 Israelis have been killed in South Lebanon according to their own counts, while the Lebanese National Resistance Front estimated casualties to be much higher. One reason for the difference in figures was that the Israelis did their best to overlook the operations carried out by young Lebanese who had consciously prepared to give their lives for the sake of dealing a major blow to the occupiers. In April there were five attacks of this kind with explosive-laden cars ramming Israeli convoys or posts. What the enemy forces most wanted to black out was that these were not motivated by religious «fanaticism». Two of the martyred resistors were women, and all belonged either to the Lebanese Communist Party or the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, both well known for their secular ideas.

The «iron fist» is now concentrated in the southernmost area where the Israelis have openly spoken of creating a «balance of fear» to keep anyone from aiding the resistance. A proof of this «balance» came on May 9th, when Israeli radio announced that the South Lebanese Army, which was halved by desertions early in 1985, had suddenly swelled to 2,000 again. This 'miracle' is the fruit of an enforced conscription campaign, part of the Israeli plan to «cleanse» this area. To the same end, dozens of families were forcibly evicted from southernmost villages around Bint Jbail in February. In further admission that it will never tame Lebanese patriots, the Israeli army has finally replaced the so-called Good Fence to 'Israel' with a 12x12 foot ditch cutting across most of the Lebanon-Palestine border.

Geagea-new Israeli invasion

The other prong of the Israeli plan for their «security zone» was Samir Geagea's crusade for Christian privilege, cantonization and alignment with the Zionist state*. Geagea's «revolt» began after a meeting between Lebanese leaders and Syrian Vice-President Khaddam, where it was decided to abolish or amend many of the Wazzan government's decrees of 1982-83, which gave greater power to the Maronites in the Lebanese Army and administration. It was also decided to open the coastal road linking Beirut to the North; this meant closure of the Lebanese Forces' illegal checkpoint at Barbara, where they extract huge revenues in the form of tolls. The deeper cause of the «revolt» was the impending Israeli withdrawal. In its wake, the most militantly pro-Israeli fascists feared losing the last of their gains from the 1982 invasion, gains as were never achieved by their own struggle despite much bloodshed.

Geagea's take-over of the Lebanese Forces command, and of the Phalangist areas in the North and East Beirut, was a quick, bloodless coup. The Lebanese Forces' real aggression was directed against nationalist Saida, explicitly the Muslim population and Palestinians of Ain al Hilweh and Mia

Mia refugee camps. On March 19, the Lebanese Forces gave Muslims in the neighborhoods east of Saida two hours to leave their homes. Those who were slow in doing this were beaten and forcibly evicted as 20,000 streamed towards Saida's center. Then began a month of merciless bombardment, which forced 25,000 Palestinians to flee the camps for Saida, and later forced many more from Saida towards Beirut. This was the first wave of refugees from the new Zionist invasion, though they have received less publicity than the subsequent Christian exodus engineered by Geagea in accordance with Israeli plans.

The local nationalist forces, Palestinians in the camps, and parts of the Lebanese Army stationed in Saida after the Israeli withdrawal, fought the Geagea invasion, but had insufficient equipment to fully protect the masses from the fascist artillery. Meanwhile the government stood by as though paralyzed. It is telling that President Amin Gemayel and his army failed to confront the revolt supposedly aimed against themselves. Actually the Phalangist Party and President Gemayel can reap the benefits of these events in a variety of ways. As the nationalist forces press for democratic reform, and Syria supports these demands, Amin Gemayel can point to the «revolt», warning that such violence can reoccur if Christian privileges are infringed upon. More importantly, the Geagea crusade serves to aggravate sectarian strife, diverting from the profound political radicalization which the majority of southerners have undergone in their heroic resistance to the Israeli occupation.

After failing to accomplish anything for the Lebanese except murdering over 110 people and making thousands of Christians and Muslims homeless, Geagea was replaced as commander of the Lebanese Forces by Eli Hobeika. Substituting one butcher for another (Hobeika led the Sabra-Shatila massacre), is intended as a trap for the nationalist forces. Hobeika's first declaration termed the Syrian role in Lebanon «essential» and called for Lebanese dialogue, signaling that now that the



Israeli tanks attacked Zrariyah-34 villagers were killed.

damage is done, the Lebanese Forces will join Amin Gemayel's tactic of trying to get Syria to rein in the nationalists.

Population Transfer

The logic of Geagea's crusade was an Israeli plan, hatched after initial failure to incite sectarian strife in the Saida area. Geagea's fascists were inserted to do the job, making local Christians hostage to a hoped-for «Muslim backlash». The Israelis and the Lebanese Forces calculated the stream of Christian refugees southwards. This is part of a population transfer, to empty the «security zone» of militant Shiites and other nationalists, and install pro-Israeli or at least anti-Muslim, subdued residents.

Aside from this overall logic, there were many concrete proofs of Israeli involvement. The nationalist forces published information that an Israeli arms shipment had reached the Lebanese Forces in Beirut port just days before Geagea announced his «revolt». Israeli planes carried out surveillance of Syrian troops in North Lebanon as Geagea took over adjacent areas. On March 22nd, Sharon visited the fascist stronghold at Jezzine while the Israeli army crossed their occupation line and took positions in three villages east of Saida. According to Lebanese security forces, these events caused 150 Christians to flee their homes near Saida, realizing the seriousness of the coming conflict.

The Maronite bishop of Saida condemned the Lebanese Forces, giving further indication that many Christians were unwilling hostages in the Israeli plan. On April 10th, Israeli gunboats shelled Ain al Hilweh and villages east of Saida as the fascist bombardment continued. The Zionists' proxy, Lahd's South Lebanese Army, also joined in the shelling and some of Geagea's forces were stationed in Jezzine under Lahd's command.

Media Warfare

Knowing that they could not sustain their positions without close Israeli backup, the Lebanese Forces declared a cease-fire the last week of April, as the Israeli army withdrew from the central and western areas of the South. Geagea retreated eastwards to join Lahd in Jezzine, taking the fighters he had brought from outside the Saida area. The nationalist forces, under siege for a month, then moved to disarm the remaining Lebanese Forces and establish nationalist control. This, the logical aftermath of any battle, was viciously labeled in much of the bourgeois media as «Muslims plundering Christian villages».

In the following days, the nationalist forces eliminated the last positions of the Lebanese Forces on the coast north of Saida (Iklim Karroub). Others moved into the areas vacated by the Israeli occupiers, clashing with Lahd's army. The bourgeois media focused on the plight of Christian refugees in Jezzine, quoting exaggerated figures of their numbers from Israeli and fascist sources, and portraying them as faced by a «Muslim onslaught». In a joint statement, Walid Jumblatt and Nabih Berri pledged that Jezzine would not be attacked, but demanded that Lahd's army leave. The nationalists declared a cease-fire in order to «thwart the Israeli plans to drive our Christian people to the border», in the words of Osama Saad, leader of the Nasserite Organization of Saida. This was however rejected: Geagea declared that the Lebanese Forces would «redeem by blood» all that they had lost. In view of the ridiculous nature of Geagea's claim after a smashing defeat, Hobeika's replacing him can also be viewed as a face-saving maneuver, and an attempt to win over the refugees in Jezzine. Many of them had derided Geagea for leaving the Saida

area on a moment's notice, expressing feelings that they had been sold out.

Nationalist leaders have welcomed the return of refugees to their homes. In fact, a pilot project began in a village just north of Saida in early May: 200 Christian families returned to their homes with guarantees of safety and help from the nationalist forces. Yet the refugee problem in Lebanon is not restricted to Christians as the Israeli and fascist media pretend. It involves thousands of all faiths, dating back a decade when the Phalangists began «cleansing» the areas under their control of Muslims, Palestinians, the poor and non-fascist Christians.

In the same way, the conflict in South Lebanon between nationalists and pro-Israeli fascists is connected to the overall Lebanese crisis. The battles in the South were paralleled by escalated fighting in the Beirut and mountain areas in late April. As we go to press, it seems a new chapter is opening in the Lebanese civil war, further complicated by persisting Israeli intervention. The coming stage will demand even clearer political vision and tighter unity among the national and progressive forces if the Israeli-fascist plan for reentrenching sectarianism and oppression is to be foiled.

*Samir Geagea, Israeli-trained commander of the Lebanese Forces in the North, unsuccessfully led the fascists in the 1983 Shouf Mountain war, only to be escorted out by the Israelis. His revolt is related to long-standing differences in the Phalangist ranks over which tactics can best insure their dominance: Total alignment with 'Israel' or a modus vivendi with the nationalist forces and Syria. In early 1984, Geagea was promoted to greater authority in the Lebanese Forces as part of a reorganization that gave the militia a stronger political profile, nominally independent from the Phalangist Party. This division of labour allowed Amin Gemayel and the Phalangist Party to pursue the latter tactic, while the Lebanese Forces kept alive the militantly fascist, anti-Arab line. This set the conditions for Geagea's «revolt».

National and Class Struggle

The following is part of an interview with George Hawi, General Secretary of the Lebanese Communist Party, printed in «Al Nahj», theoretical journal of the Arab communist parties, No.4, May, 1984. He addresses the question of strategic and tactical tasks and alliances at that particular stage of struggle in Lebanon, as well as the relation between national and class struggle. His analysis is an important contribution to evaluating the foregoing period in order to understand the new phase heralded by the Israeli withdrawal. Printing this is part of our tribute to the heroic Lebanese National Resistance which forced this withdrawal.

At present we face two kinds of tasks. Although they are undoubtedly interlinked, each has its own characteristics and distinctions. The first is the continuation of the national liberation of Lebanon, while the second is related to the issue of democratic reform of the political system.

Within this framework, the Communist Party sees the central task to be the mobilization of all energies in order to end the Israeli occupation unconditionally, as implementation of the UN resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 508 and 509, without infringing on the sovereignty of Lebanon and the freedom of its people.

Our party saw *from the beginning* that armed struggle will become the primary among other forms of struggle to liberate the occupied Lebanese territories. This was based on our analysis of the objective reality of Lebanon and the situation under occupation; it was based on the experience of the successive Israeli occupations of other Arab lands since 1947-8, and the failure of all Arab policies to end these; it was also based on our understanding of the nature of the struggle and relations on the international level.

The primacy of armed struggle

The beginning in this respect does not mean June 6th, 1982, the day the massive Israeli invasion of Lebanon began. Rather it goes back to the second national congress of the party in 1968. That congress specified the nature of the struggle being waged in the Lebanese arena in connection with the overall Middle East conflict. It also specified the Israeli plans for Lebanon and called for preparations to carry arms in support of the Palestinian resistance movement in order to contribute to the pan-Arab liberation led by the Palestinian revolution, as well as to confront a possible Israeli invasion; this became more than a mere possibility as Lebanon was becoming an essential arena for the Arab national liberation struggle.

In 1970, after the massacres in Jordan and the death of Abdul Nasser, the Party's Central Committee reaffirmed our view of the overall imperialist-Zionist-reactionary assault on the Arab people's national liberation movement, and our expectations of how this would impact on Lebanon, including the expectation of Israeli attacks that would go beyond skirmishes with limited purposes to become direct occupation. Accordingly, we accelerated execution of the Central Committee's decisions, taken in the light of the second national congress, related to the task of preparing the Party militarily. The formation of the Popular Guard (Al Haras al Shaabi) in the South in 1969 was the result of this long-range vision. Our initiative then, to form the Popular Militias (Quwat al Ansar) in collaboration with our sister communist parties in the countries surrounding Palestine, originated from the same conviction:

that it was becoming increasingly important to practice armed struggle as an essential ingredient in the overall struggle. Our party continued to develop its military preparedness together with the fighters of the Palestinian revolution. Our party learned from their rich experience and distinguished assistance, and attempted to develop this experiment whenever and however it was possible. On the other hand, we paid with them the price of the errors involved in such an experiment, as well as the heavy price extracted with the transformation of Lebanon into the main arena of the pan-Arab national struggle against Israeli aggression and the overall imperialist-Zionist assault in the region.

In the mid-seventies, when the basic contradictions escalated in Lebanon and reactionary violence imposed itself, the Party continued preparations to increase its role in the military field. At the beginning of June 1982, when we were confronted by the open and massive Israeli aggression, the Party threw most of its weight into confronting the US-supported invasion, side by side with the Palestinian revolution and other national and progressive forces in the South. The Party threw most of its weight into the battle which reached its peak in the steadfastness of Beirut. However, in light of the Israelis' quantitative technological and firepower superiority, our long-range Marxist-Leninist vision determined that the Party should not throw all of its weight into an open confrontation that would destroy all the potentials for steadfastness. There were other preparations made earlier by the Party, called the Special Forces; their role was exemplified in the beginning of the anti-occupation military action behind the lines reached by the Israeli army and in areas it had «pacified».

The birth of the LNRF

After the Israeli occupation forces had consolidated their control in Beirut, September 14-16th, 1982, the Party initiated its famous call to start Lebanese national resistance against the occupation, and announced the formation of the Lebanese National Resistance Front (LNRF). A few hours thereafter, the first operations took place in Beirut, to prove to the masses and the national and progressive forces, as well as to the enemy, that the Lebanese people would not accept the occupation, that the fight had not yet been settled in favor of the US and Israel, and that their occupation of Lebanon was not necessarily a point of strength. In fact, Beirut and all Lebanon might become a suitable beginning for the process of Lebanese liberation that is organically linked to the pan-Arab struggle against imperialist and Zionist interests. The LNRF's operations accumulated to become an essential component among the

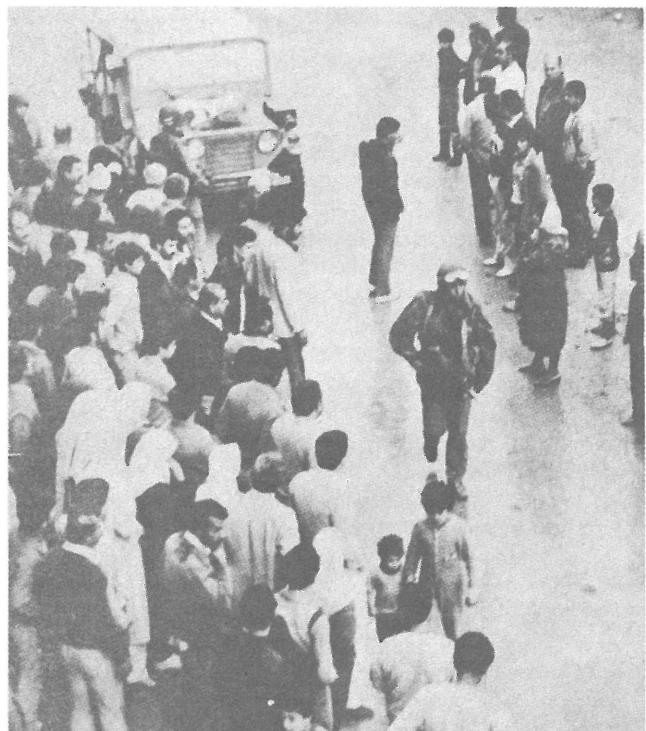
factors that accelerated the pace of the Israeli withdrawal from Beirut. LNRF strikes continued in other regions and are still harassing the occupiers.

Our party is proud of the fact that our call for resistance became the slogan of the broad masses of our people, and of many national and progressive forces; we are proud that it is supported by people immensely diverse in terms of their class and ideological leanings. I do not reveal a secret when I emphasize that our party not only fired the first bullet in the process of the Lebanese national resistance, but also contributes to more than half of the heroic operations against occupation, in the framework of the LNRF. We mention these facts only in response to distortions that have come from sectors that were supposed to be siding with the revolutionary Lebanese forces. I am referring to some degenerate propaganda organs linked to the right-wing Palestinian leadership which presented itself as being behind these heroic operations. This is a complete distortion of the heroic Lebanese struggle and of the important Palestinian contribution which essentially came from the Palestinian left.

Focusing on occupation

Emphasizing the Israeli occupation played a decisive role among all the factors which contributed to the uprising in Lebanon, and its current and potential impact on the Arab level. An unfavorable balance of power existed following the Israeli occupation and the US-Israeli political and military domination. Focusing on the occupation not only automatically raised the level of Lebanese popular and national uprising; it also gave us confidence and boldness to confront the US occupation and Phalangist hegemony in both its official (state) and unofficial capacity. Having paralyzed the Israeli factor, Lebanese national resistance enforced the paralysis of the other components of the enemy alliance, externally and internally, and deepened the crisis that engulfed their plans. This was and will remain the central element that, if touched, will affect all aspects of the enemy plans.

1984 demonstration in Saida dispersed by the Israeli forces



On the same basis, we concentrated our efforts on forcing the abrogation of the May 17th agreement. We made that struggle the litmus test for sincerity in rejecting the political conditions of the occupation, since this agreement was actually the Lebanese copy of the Camp David accords. As such the struggle against the agreement became an essential part of the Arab national and progressive forces' battle against Camp David.

Overthrowing the Phalangist Party's rule is also among the national liberation tasks. It was inconceivable for the Phalangists to attain the presidency if not for the Israeli occupation, US military presence and the activities of US envoy Philip Habib.

On this basis, the Party concentrated its efforts on fighting within the framework of the LNRF, and on encouraging and organizing popular uprisings in the South against the occupation. We also organized the broadest possible Lebanese solidarity campaign against the occupation, attempting to create a new national spirit antagonistic to Israel, for the occupation stood in contradiction to the interests of the vast majority of the Lebanese people and to all the national interests.

On this basis, the broadest popular energies could be mobilized; the broadest unity could be forged among the progressive and national forces upholding the independence, sovereignty and Arab identity of Lebanon. I can state with confidence that never before has Lebanon had such breadth, size and diversity allied in one front, as was the case with the unity of different social, political, ideological and religious tendencies in the National Salvation Front, and its alliance with the Amal movement. This unity and breadth was furthered by other, complementary forms of national action, such as the meetings at Dar al Fatwa which represented a broad sector of the bourgeoisie in Beirut, the position of liberal Christian trends such as that of former President Raymond Edde, and the Catholic and Orthodox churches, rejecting the logic of going along with the Israeli plans for Lebanon.

National and social liberation

The other kind of tasks, those related to internal reform, are interlinked with the first kind in a way that makes it difficult to see them as a separate kind of tasks, despite the importance of making such a distinction. This is a result of the interrelation between the tasks of national liberation and those of social liberation within the process of the national democratic revolution in the countries of the three continents. These countries face several forms of foreign domination, coexistent with the tasks of a social nature. This is especially true in the light of the nature of the struggle on the international level in our times. This makes the (local) struggle more comprehensive and internationalist; its main directions are determined according to the logic of the main struggle between the «two camps», which is in essence a class struggle. Thus, accomplishing the tasks of the national revolution is integrated with the struggle to accomplish the tasks of the social revolution; the national struggle is dependent on qualitative advances to accomplish the tasks of revolutionary social change. Therefore, the forces most capable of waging the liberation struggle to the very end are those most capable of waging the struggle aimed at social change to the very end. In other words, the tasks of national liberation become essential components of the historical tasks of the working class and its vanguard party.

This relation does not, however, indicate convergence. Neither does it indicate complete separation into stages, i.e. accomplishing the tasks of one stage, then starting the other. ►

Dialectical vision, as we understand it, means viewing the process through the complexities, linkage and interaction of its component stages. In this way, the characteristics of the first stage do not get overlooked, but rather emphasized at a certain point in order to develop the common denominator for the unity of the broadest forces that have an interest in accomplishing the tasks of the stage. At the same time, the strategic horizons for the evolution of the process do not get overlooked; the working class continuously advances its position within the alliance, on the ideological, practical and leadership levels. This development will in turn help prepare the subjective factor that is capable of moving the national revolution to the stage of social revolution. At a certain point, such an interrelation will create additional difficulties in the face of the working class and its revolutionary party; the unity of the national and progressive forces, established on the basis of the national question, will be threatened. Then the internal relations among the forces of the alliance must change, qualitatively and quantitatively, through gradually transforming the tasks of the revolutionary process towards social liberation. Such are the difficulties we face now in Lebanon.

Alliances: conflict within unity

We met in the framework of the National Salvation Front, our party having contributed significantly to its initiation. This front was based on acting to unconditionally remove the Israeli forces from our country, abrogate the May 17th agreement, and reject US hegemony and Phalangist rule. The enthusiasm of some other participants for accomplishing these tasks was not less than that of our party and other progressive parties. There are many examples of this, such as the positions of Prime Minister Karami and ex-President Suleiman Franjeh.

As a result of the Lebanese national uprising, Syria's great supportive role, the contribution of the vanguard forces of the Palestinian revolution, the support of the Arab national liberation forces and especially of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, we were able to inflict a humiliating defeat on US imperialist policy, regionally and internationally, by forcing the US troops to leave, abrogating the May 17th agreement and opening the issue of internal reforms. Since then, we have found ourselves in objective contradiction with some of our allies, regarding the forthcoming political, economic and social development in the country.

The important feature of this new contradiction, resulting from the other aspect of the revolutionary process, is that it occurs while the tasks of the first aspect are yet incomplete: Israel is still occupying a part of Lebanon; the May 17th agreement was only officially abrogated, while the spirit that produced it in the first place is still very much alive, since it is the spirit of the Israelis' plans and their agents from within; the danger of US occupation was lessened greatly but not completely ruled out, as the conditions for its reimposition are still with us; and the rule of the Phalangist Party was shaken but not overthrown. At the same time, if the horizons of the other aspects of the revolutionary process are opened, a contradiction will necessarily appear among the participants in the (national) alliance. This contradiction is necessarily a class contradiction since the alliance itself is based on the interests of more than one social class in combatting foreign occupation and domination. Regardless of the various forms of expression, whether or not it takes a sectarian form as in Lebanon, this contradiction remains in essence a class one.

This makes the situation more complicated, imposing more difficulties on our actions, not only vis-a-vis the enemy

camp, but also within the framework of national alliances, in our striving to concentrate on the central task, while not ignoring the horizons for developing the revolutionary process. We cannot accept sacrificing the participation of essential forces on the side of the national liberation struggle against the Israeli occupation, US domination and the Phalangist rule. At the same time, we cannot accept the lowest denominator of the program of sectors of the bourgeoisie regarding these matters. The broad front should not be at the expense of the democratic, developmental, revolutionary program of the party of the working class. On many points, this program meets the agreement of sectors of the bourgeoisie, as well as the groups of the Lebanese national movement and the progressive forces.

Democratic reform is necessary for Lebanon's independence

That is why I said at the beginning that we face two kinds of tasks and coordinating between them. So you see us concentrating on mobilizing all energies behind the central slogan that is still all-pervasive: unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces from our land, preventing the return of US domination and struggling to end its remains. At the same time, to complete this kind of tasks, there remains the slogan of preventing the hegemony of the Phalangist Party, which is a manifestation of US-Israeli domination. We reaffirm the centrality of this task. Likewise, there can be no reunification of Lebanon, no guarantee for its independence and genuine sovereignty, or for its existence at all, if our struggle against Israeli and US domination and Phalangist rule is not accompanied by the struggle for internal democratic reform. Democratic reform is necessary to prevent the political, social and economic make-up of Lebanon from continuing to be a breeding ground for elements of the Zionist design which aims at fragmenting Lebanon on a sectarian basis. Therefore, we raise the slogans for radical, non-sectarian, democratic reform as tasks of struggle related on the one hand to accomplishing the tasks of the national revolution, as far as national independence is concerned. We raise them on the other hand as tasks related to development towards revolutionary accomplishments in the social field.

Within this framework, our party recognizes the central tasks from their national as well as democratic change aspect. We proceed according to this dual vision: We mobilize the broadest forces to create a more favorable balance of forces between the progressive and national forces as a whole on the one hand, and the main enemy, represented by Israel, US imperialism and their direct, dependent agents on the other. At the same time, we wage the long-range struggle to change the balance of forces within the broad national alliance in favor of the democratic, progressive, revolutionary forces, so as to insure accomplishment of the first kind of tasks, and proceed with accomplishing the second kind related to democratic reform.

The coordination process involved is not easy; it does not fall within the domain of habitual skill, diplomacy or flexibility, even though it requires the utmost of these. Rather it hinges on the balance of power, firm adherence to the essence with flexibility concerning form, the sound political position of the working class party and its determination to consolidate its positions among the active social forces, particularly among the working class, the toiling sectors, revolutionary intellectuals and youth. Such a party, while fighting foreign occupation and domination, refuses to submit its legitimate aspirations to the plans of the bourgeoisie to rearrange its own interests, for example on the

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.

Jordan

New Government for Camp David

The formation of a new government in early April is a sure sign that the Jordanian monarchy is serious about entering the imperialist settlement now. Politically, the composition of the new government is geared to removing the obstacles to Jordan's entry into Camp David; specifically it aims at forming a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to negotiate with the US, then 'Israel'. This means pressuring Arafat to explicitly recognize Security Council resolution 242, and thereby the right of 'Israel' to exist, and/or relinquish the PLO's right to represent the Palestinians. It also means improving relations with Syria, so as to contain opposition to Jordanian-PLO involvement in the US plans. Moreover, King Hussein is shrewd enough to realize that he may get nothing from imperialism and Zionism in this round. In such case, he would need good relations with Syria in order to survive in the aftermath.

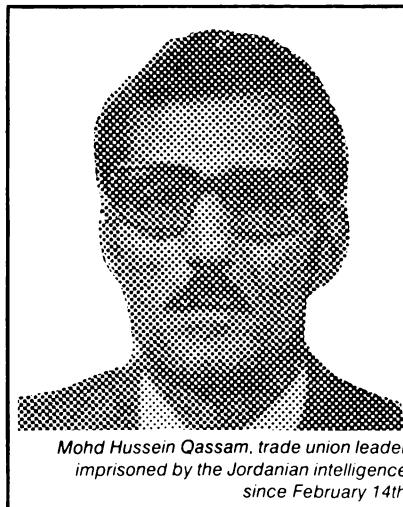
Politicos to the fore

The last two government heads, Obeidat and Badran, rose to political office from the intelligence service; they were thus well suited to preside over the repression on which the monarchy relies so heavily. Yet what Hussein needs now is a political breakthrough, so he chose Zaid Rifai as prime minister and defense minister. Rifai is a skilled politician, educated at a US prestige university, Harvard, and with excellent contacts in the US establishment. Rifai's other advantage is long-standing relations with Syria. He headed three governments between 1973 and 1976, the highpoint of Syrian-Jordanian relations. Unlike his predecessors, he is not suspected of supporting the Muslim Brotherhood against Syria.

Rifai is also known for his tough line on the PLO and the Palestinians generally. When the Rabat Summit recognized the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in 1974, Rifai quarrelled with Arafat. In effect, Rifai told the PLO chairman: Now you took the right to represent the Palestinians, but you will return, asking us to represent you before the US. Thanks to Arafat's right-wing deviation, these

words became a prophecy.

Hussein's quest to control the Palestinians is also seen in the composition of the government as a whole: Eleven of twenty-three ministers are Palestinian, accounting for all the main cities and traditional families of the West Bank. From a class viewpoint, this is the ultimate weapon of the Jordanian regime against the Palestinian people. It has long worked to cultivate a sector of the traditional Palestinian bourgeoisie as a loyal «leadership» to collaborate in controlling the masses whose resistance has thus far blocked Camp David's completion. It is not just history that the Jordanian regime was created by British colonialism in 1921, to absorb the Palestinians soon to be dispossessed by Zionist settler colonialism. In the current phase, the regime carries out rear guard action, in imperialism's service, to complement the Zionist invasion of Lebanon, which caused the Palestinian right-wing to give up the national struggle.



*Mohd Hussein Qassam, trade union leader
imprisoned by the Jordanian intelligence
since February 14th*

The political economy of Camp David

The former government represented the bureaucratic bourgeoisie who opt for a state role in the economy. Especially in the context of Jordan's economic difficulties and dependence, this has been having bad effects on the private sector. There was pressure on Hussein from the comprador, finance and commercial strata of the

bourgeoisie to give more freedom to the private sector. Rifai represents the king's positive response. His first meeting in office was with the Chamber of Commerce where he promised liberalization of the economy, i.e. less state control. This should prepare Jordan for the economic side of Camp David: even more dependence on imperialism with results as can be clearly seen in Egypt.

In this context, it is interesting to note the article of Jordanian Crown Prince Talal Bin Hassan in *Foreign Policy* (Winter 1984-85). After warning of chaos in the region if there is no settlement of the Arab-Zionist conflict, he states the regime's alternative to social revolution: «A comprehensive settlement would release the constructive capacities of both Jordanians and Palestinians to work for socioeconomic development that can consolidate the peace. It could easily turn the region into an advanced workshop and a maintenance center of modern technology. Such a settlement will have to be supported by a Marshall-type plan for the region...»

For this, the Jordanian regime launched the «land for peace» formula, and it is this dream in which the Palestinian right-wing bourgeoisie hopes to find a niche. This is the class basis for Arafat's deviation and the Amman accord. However, a glance at the realities of imperialist and Zionist dominance in the area shows that such dreams are truly illusions, and moreover nightmares for the masses. Zionism, including the Labor Party, is not prepared to enter into an equal exchange; it has only eyed the chance for being accepted in the area, and thus getting a larger share of the exploitation of Arab resources and labor. Increased imperialist dominance will not bring development, but only more dependency and some crumbs for the regimes and bourgeoisie. This reservation can be irrelevant for King Hussein and his ilk, as long as their thrones are secure. Yet for the Palestinian masses, such a «solution» denotes disaster, heralding new, more entrenched forms of partition, domination and exploitation of their land and themselves.



Sudan

In early May, a PFLP delegation headed by Politbureau member Salah Salah visited Sudan. The delegation had the opportunity to meet with several ministers in Sudan's new cabinet, as well as with all the democratic and progressive organizations.

There can be no doubt that the overthrow of the Numeiri dictatorship was an act of the Sudanese people, and a victory for all national and progressive forces in the area as well. The critical questions now posed concern the character of the new regime and what policies it will pursue.

Numeiri's demise was something of a foregone conclusion. Having long ago put the progressive and popular forces in opposition to his reactionary policies, Numeiri this year purged his right-wing allies, the Muslim Brotherhood. Significant sectors of the bourgeoisie were appalled by the regime's corruption, economic bankruptcy and counter-productive repression, exercised under the cover of Islamic law. By the end of 1984, the US administration gravely doubted Numeiri's ability to manage Sudan. Some had predicted that the Reagan administration and/or Mubarak's regime might foment a coup to insure their interests, in view of Sudan's strategic location, resources and support to Camp David. However, the dynamic that unleashed the April 6th power change was an entirely different one, driven forward by the popular uprising.

As Numeiri flew to visit Reagan, student protests erupted against dramatic, unannounced price increases; they were joined by broader sectors of the masses. This was followed by the doctors' strike which grew into a general strike with the stated aim of toppling the regime. The professionals' strike

assumed real dimensions as millions of Sudanese thronged to the streets, attacking the institutions of the dictatorship.

Soldiers and young officers instinctively sympathized with the popular uprising, having already become disenchanted with the regime, chiefly due to its unjust and unsuccessful war on South Sudan. Their initial efforts to persuade the army leadership to move against the regime failed, but finally seeing that Numeiri was doomed, General Swaredahab, Defense Minister and Army Commander, led a coup on April 6th.

It can be said that while the people acted, the generals reacted. Those who compose the new military council can be labeled conservative, but they had not had pivotal roles in relations with the US or Mubarak's Egypt. Swaredahab himself had only three weeks before assumed his top posts, previously held by Numeiri himself. In the Sudanese army, 60% of the soldiers come from the South. In view of these facts and the strength of the popular movement, it is difficult to imagine that the new military council can establish itself as a real dictatorship. What has been occurring since April 6th is a struggle within the bounds of the newly achieved democracy, between the Military Council and the National Alliance, the coalition of forces that actually overthrew the regime.¹ This struggle has national as well as class overtones. Its result will determine the regime's future course.

To assess the internal balance of power and what prospects this paints, it is useful to look briefly at the popular struggle over the years, the state of the main political forces today, and the changes now underway.

Struggle traditions

The background for the uprising that toppled Numeiri is years of popular struggle. In addition to increasingly frequent, spontaneous revolts of the hungry against escalating food prices (at least ten this year), there was the persistent organized struggle of progressive forces such as the Communist Party. Of special importance is the long tradition of militant trade union struggle waged by Sudan's relatively developed working class. Moreover, popular opposition to the regime in the South had developed into a full-scale liberation war led by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

One indication of the workers' potential was seen in 1981, when a 42-day strike, initiated by railway workers, brought the country to a standstill. Initially Numeiri was forced to backtrack, but he then retaliated by murdering, firing and imprisoning hundreds of labor activists, especially democrats and communists. This was one incident in a recurring pattern: 10,000 workers have been fired as punishment for militant activities in the 16 years of Numeiri's rule. This massive repression sheds light on the fact that proletarian organizations were not the apparent leadership of the movement that toppled Numeiri. Rather professional unions, which Numeiri never dared hit so hard, came to the fore in the national interests. However, the trade unions and progressive forces now have greater freedom of action. They stand as the ultimate guarantee that a genuine national

democratic process will proceed from the popular uprising's current victory.

Political parties

The three main political parties in Sudan are the Umma, the Democratic/National Union and the Communist Party.

The Umma, led by Sadeq al Mahdi, represents the agricultural bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the remaining feudalists. Traditionally pro-US, this party made a tactical shift under the impact of the coup, espousing a national policy. The party is divided, but the dissident wing has not organized itself. If it unites, the Umma could become the biggest party.

The Democratic Union represents the middle bourgeoisie with national but not radical inclinations. After the power change, the party divided and the National Union was formed. If the two reunite, this might be the biggest party.

In contrast, the Communist Party is united and reorganized itself underground well prior to April 6th. A part of its cadres now work openly. Independent political observers estimate the Communist Party to be the largest in view of its country-wide membership and mass support. In Khartoum, the party's celebration of International Workers Day attracted 100,000 participants, enough to worry the US ambassador who consulted with Sadeq al Mahdi several times in the course of that single day. The Communist Party is active in working to sustain the popular mobilization needed to steer the new regime's course in a positive direction.

With new groups being announced daily after April 6th, there are now at least 40 other parties in Sudan. Among the traditionalist forces, the Muslim Brotherhood is worthy of note. The Brotherhood has been weakened by division into three wings. More important, its main wing headed by Hassan Turabi acquired the hate of the masses

due to its alliance with Numeiri until being purged a scant two weeks before the popular uprising. Turabi has thus far failed in his attempt to reunite the Brotherhood and was recently scorned at a mass meeting, where he had to be protected by the police. Turabi opposes the National Alliance, while the Republican Brotherhood has joined in the alliance.²

The process of change

On April 8th, the general strike halted after having enforced demands for the abolition of the State Security Police, Numeiri's constitution and single party; the release of prisoners, and the Military Council's agreement to later relinquish power to a civilian government. At the same time, the National Alliance issued its charter of proposals for the new government: return to the 1964 constitution, guarantees for basic human rights, regional self-government for southern Sudan, development of Sudan's natural resources to combat the economic crisis, independence and nonalignment in the context of Sudan's Afro-Asian identity, decentralization, abolishing the institutions of the Numeiri regime and purging the parasitic class it created; a new constitution should be ratified by a democratically elected body after the transitional government.

However, there are already signs that the Military Council is balking on key points. It was agreed that for a transitional period, power would be divided between the Military Council, the civilian cabinet appointed in late April and the National Alliance, with the cabinet having decision-making authority. Yet the Military Council has entrenched itself in the palace, exercising authority unilaterally in foreign and economic affairs and concerning the South. The Military Council packed the cabinet with three Numeiri supporters as «representatives of the South». The National Alliance is working for their dismissal, leaving the seats empty until an agreement with the SPLA, to then be filled with genuine representatives of the South.

In addition to delay in putting the 1964 constitution into effect, the Military Council has in practice opposed the National Alliance's call for purging the former regime, especially the security forces where the CIA had numerous links. To the contrary, the Military Council released 40 security officers who had been imprisoned, claiming that they were only administrative personnel, whereas one was the third-ranking

officer. This step caused dissension within the council itself with one of the members declaring that he would boycott the council until these officers were reimprisoned.

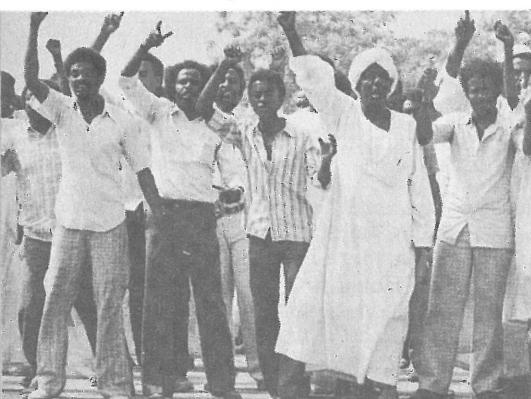
In the face of these negative indications, the National Alliance has the power to mobilize the masses to enforce the policies for which they have struggled. This potential has been reinforced by elections in the General Union of Workers of Sudan which groups 4 million workers from 42 trade unions. The General Union had withheld participation in the National Alliance until these elections. Similarly it has refused to have reactionary trade union leaders replaced by administrative procedures as was suggested by the cabinet. Instead the union held general elections in early May where democrats, nationalists and communists won the vast majority of leading positions. This enables the union to join the National Alliance, adding the weight of the organized working class to the process for change.

Challenges

The new regime in Khartoum faces a range of challenges aside from, but related to, the demands for democracy and a national policy. The following interview with Dr. John Garang outlines the challenge of the South and its implications. Moreover, drought has aggravated the rape of Sudan's agriculture enacted by Numeiri's promotion of agrobusiness for the export market. UN officials have predicted that one million Sudanese children may die from starvation in the next few months (in addition to famine refugees from other countries). Due to Numeiri's policy, Sudan is totally dependent on US grain imports to stave off starvation. This gives the Reagan Administration an added card in pressuring the Military Council to remain within pro-imperialist bounds. But the real solution is another: Democracy for the masses all over Sudan is the only way for mobilizing the national energies required to correct this situation.

¹ The National Alliance for Salvation includes representatives for engineers, doctors, lawyers, academics, banking and insurance employees; the president of Khartoum University Student Council; representatives for the Umma, the Democratic Union, the Communist Party, the Baathists, and the Republican Brotherhood.

² This wing was led by Mohammed Mahmoud Taha, hanged by Numeiri in January for criticising the harsh application of Islamic law as inconsistent with the spirit of Islam.



«For a united, federal, democratic Sudan»

Interview with Col/Dr. John Garang, leader of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army and Movement (SPLA/SPLM)

How do you characterize the new regime in Sudan?

The new military regime in Khartoum has no real relation with the forces that brought down Numeiri: the SPLA, the workers, professionals, students and the traditional political parties. None of these are represented in the ruling Military Council which is the real power. Neither are most of these forces represented in the civilian cabinet of Al Jazoli Dafalla which is composed wholly from the professional unions and traditional political parties. These are uncontested facts. The new regime does not belong to those who suffered the most during Numeiri's 16 years of misrule, or who actually struggled to overthrow him. The new regime is therefore bound to be insensitive and intransigent.

In effect, it is the regime of the same generals who, until April 5th or even 6th, were still defending Numeiri and shooting down demonstrators who stormed Kober prison to release the prisoners. This is why we denounced the regime as neo-Numeirism, Numeiri's regime in a different form. Whatever clothes the hyena puts on, it remains a hyena.

What is Swaredahab's position on the problem in southern Sudan, and what are the aims of your struggle?

The regime never stopped fighting the SPLA even during the seven days of ceasefire which we declared. They attacked our forces in Farhala and Jehon. Then, especially after they announced their own unilateral ceasefire, they attacked our forces in Fangak. The regime is actually preparing for war not peace. All this talk about peace is only to deceive the Sudanese public and hoodwink international opinion. Until now, the regime has never sent a messenger or message to the SPLA. The generals base their policies on lies and wishful thinking, not on objective realities, in complete disregard of the Sudanese people.

As to Swaredahab's stand on the so-called Southern Question, you will have to ask him. Our view of the problem is clear in our manifesto: The SPLA/SPLM has long ago, in July 1983, rejected the thesis of the Question or Problem of Southern Sudan. It is the nationalities question that must be addressed in general. It is simply because the South took up arms, in 1955-77, that the nationalities problem has traditionally been identified with the South, but other nationalities or regions are also capable of taking up arms if no general solution is found.

In fact, the war in the South has effected other regions and nationalities in a major irreversible way. So there is a general demand for some form of regionalism for the West, East and North. This is a fact. So, if you solve the problem of southern Sudan even in what appears to be a satisfactory way, then you will soon after be faced with the problem of the Nuba Mountains, the Fur or the Beja, and the country will again be bogged down in civil war.

Hence, the SPLA/SPLM addresses the nationalities question in Sudan as a whole and proposes a comprehensive solution: a united, federal, democratic Sudan in which the federal states have real power, in the hands of the masses not the elitist intellectual bourgeoisie. The structure of the federal government would be shared in such a way that all the states effectively participate.

Why aren't you participating in the new cabinet?

It is not true that we refused to participate in the Military Council or in the civilian cabinet of Al Jazoli Dafalla. Nobody consulted the SPLA/SPLM. As usual things were determined in Khartoum, by Khartoum. The regime created a story that I was on my way to Khartoum, knowing that this could not and would not materialize. This was simply to deceive the public that the SPLA/SPLM had refused to participate. The strategy of the generals was to isolate the real forces that overthrew Numeiri. Jazoli's government is not really a government. It was a concoction of the generals to defuse tension in the streets and make people return to work. It has no powers whatsoever. Take foreign affairs as an example: It is the generals who are globetrotting, not the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs. Jazoli's government should resign and leave the generals to run their show until the people run them out.

How can the generals' attempt to cool down the popular uprising be prevented?

The real issues that led to the popular uprising will continue to baffle the generals as they did Numeiri. The economy is in complete shambles and will continue to deteriorate under the plunder of the generals' neo-Numeirism. The national and religious questions will continue to haunt them. Given their narrow, sectarian outlook, they cannot come near to a correct analysis, let alone a solution. To be more concrete, the real guarantee that the generals will not succeed in hijacking the people's revolution is the SPLA. The SPLA is the dynamo of the popular uprising and will keep it aflame to burn down the new generals.

What really happened concerning Numeiri's allowing Sudan to be used for the transfer of Ethiopian Jews to Israel?

The Sudan Airways workers are best situated to expose this plot. They are doing this well and we appreciate their revolutionary stand. Numeiri's motive in this undertaking was most certainly financial. It is reported that more than 56 million dollars in bribes were paid to Numeiri and his immediate circle of officials. Such a giant project cannot be executed without the knowledge and explicit involvement of the ministry of defense. Civil aviation was under the ministry of defense at this time. And who was the minister of defense when the project was executed? Of course, the same generals who are now the government. The question is not whether, but how much some of them took of the 56 million dollars, and to what extent they participated in the plot. Numeiri and the present regime are inseparable. The generals cannot bring Numeiri to trial for this affair or for any of his hideous crimes because that would also incriminate them. Some window dressing can be made to hoodwink the public, but no real

people's trial is possible under the present regime.

How do you think Sudan's socio-economic problems can be solved?

The economic and political problems are very closely interwoven. You cannot solve one without the other. But in our situation, and that of underdeveloped countries in general, the political problem is primary; it determines the direction and speed of the solution to the economic problems.

In terms of resources, the Sudan is a very rich country with vast agricultural lands and many minerals including oil, uranium and iron. The Sudanese people are very industrious and qualified in many fields. There are over one million highly trained Sudanese running the economies of other countries in the Middle East and Africa, instead of their own, because Numeirism drove them away. We have all the necessary ingredients for socio-economic development: natural and human resources, and even the finances in the form of oil trapped under our land. What we need is a correct system to put these ingredients together to generate real, sustained socio-economic development for the masses.

The Numeiri regime tried to put these resources together but failed miserably because it ignored the Sudanese masses who must be the center and objective of development. Numeiri used a mechanical formula: Sudan's natural resources + Western technology =± Breadbasket of the Middle East. This left us with an empty breadbasket for Sudan and \$9 billion in external debts. Without denying global interdependence, what we need is an economic and therefore political, social and cultural policy that looks inward, that is truly Sudanese, making the Sudanese the basic ingredient and objective of development. Such a policy must be based on the people, by the people and for the people. Only they will determine and make such a policy work. This is in general; the Sudanese people will provide the details.

How do you view the Military Council's attempt to amend the Sharia (Islamic law)?

Sharia in any form is unpopular in the whole country. The new military regime talks about amending, but it is ridiculous and unconstitutional to amend

an unconstitutional law. The generals announced the dissolving of Numeiri's constitution, Sudanese Socialist Union and State Security Organization, but they are going to amend Numeiri's decree of Sharia, a decree that never even entered his illegal constitution, and that maimed and humiliated hundreds of Sudanese whose only crime was that Numeiri's policy caused them to go hungry. The regime should have scrapped, not reformed, Sharia. They should instead talk about compensating those citizens who suffered physical and emotional harm under Numeiri's Sharia, and bring to trial those criminals who traded in Islam.

How was the SPLA formed and what are its relations with other national forces?

The SPLA was formed from Battalion 105 commanded by Comrade Lt. Col. Kerubina Kuanyin Bol, and Battalion 104 commanded by Comrade Lt. Col. William Nyrum Bany. These were units of the Sudanese Army until May 1983, when they were attacked from Juba and Malakal, as a consequence of one of Numeiri's many reckless decisions. The two battalions resisted for two days after which they withdrew to the

bush to regroup and form the SPLA/SPLM. Since then, over 5000 Sudanese Army soldiers, police, prison and game wardens have joined the SPLA.

The SPLA/SPLM is a national organization that aims to liberate Sudan from economic backwardness and all forms of sectarianism, and to institute a truly democratic government. The movement is open to all Sudanese irrespective of race, religion, sex or region of birth. We seek to work with any national force with which we have similar views and/or objectives, and according to the mode of cooperation agreed upon. ●



Political prisoners liberated by the masses

Impending Aggression on Kurdistan

A Call from the Iraqi Democratic Patriotic Front (IDPF)

The latest reports from Iraq indicate that the Iraqi Defense Minister visited, on May 4th, the city of Zakho in Kurdistan, which is the headquarters of the Iraqi 11th division. During his visit, the Iraqi armed forces in Kurdistan were placed on full alert, along with extensive amassing of the regime's mercenaries. Iraq is amassing its troops and mercenaries in the Sidakan area near the Iraqi-Turkish-Iranian triangle. There is similar Turkish troop amassing across the border.

This information shows that both the Turkish and Iraqi regimes are setting the stage for an extensive joint foray into the area stretching from Badinan (the western area of Iraqi Kurdistan) to the above-mentioned triangle. This area is inhabited by thousands of Iraqi Kurdish families and a large number of soldiers who have deserted the war. They are currently under the protection of IDPF. Before the Turkish invasion and Iraqi attack began, Iraqi artillery shelled the

villages singled out for the joint aggression. Thus, Saddam Hussein's regime, which boasts about defending the country, is paving the way for the fascist Turkish regime to enter for the second time. It is feeding the old ambitions of Turkish generals, linked with NATO, to reach out to the oil sources, and to facilitate the extermination of Kurdish people and striking IDPF forces.

IDPF fighters are in a state of readiness to repel the joint Turkish-Iraqi aggression and defend our country. IDPF forces will act as they did in confronting the Turkish invasion in 1983. IDPF fighters call on our people and progressive, patriotic forces to offer their utmost help in defense of our people and country. These forces appeal to Arab progressive forces and states, and all decent forces in the world, to show solidarity with our people, to confront and halt the barbaric Turkish incursion. (excerpt)

May 18, 1985

Star Wars Block Disarmament

They speak of defense but prepare for attack; they advertise a space shield but forge a space sword. Washington is staking all on force and does not try to conceal it. It hopes to gain a prevailing force that would subordinate the world to America. There, diplomacy and negotiations are literally subordinate to missiles and bombers.

With these words Soviet leader Mikhael Gorbachev aptly described US imperialism's aggressive strategy. His words also explain why no progress was made in the Geneva disarmament talks which ended April 23rd.

In line with its consistent practice of peaceful coexistence, the Soviet Union had clearly stated aims at Geneva: Chief among them was preventing the militarization of space, as well as general arms reduction, especially of nuclear weapons. In contrast, the US wanted the Geneva talks as a forum for pressuring the Soviet Union, while at the same time appearing to be for peace. The Reagan Administration hoped that brandishing the «Strategic Defense Initiative» for space weaponry would scare the Soviets into compromising their defense capacities. This would give the US a free hand to use its nuclear might to threaten not only the Soviet Union but progressive forces around the world. However, this aim floundered on Soviet determination to protect the gains of socialism and counter imperialism's global aggression. In the face of US insistence on embarking on Star Wars, Comrade Gorbachev made it clear that the needed countermeasures would be taken.

The other, related aim of the Reagan Administration was rallying the American public and its European allies around its military drive. Without scruples, the Reagan Administration used the Geneva talks for pushing its inflated military budget proposals. The US Congress complied, approving funding for MX missiles in the name of «national unity» in the face of the Soviets. In the words of a prominent Senator, «The MX may not be a perfect weapon system, but it will make the job easier for US arms negotiators.» As the Geneva talks

were concluding, the Pentagon published a paper, falsely claiming that the Soviet Union is already advancing in space weapons, and showing how the US could test space weapons without violating the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (sic). This is the start of a notorious campaign to push Reagan's proposal for spending \$30 billion on Star Wars research over the next five years, as the first installment of overall research costs, estimated at \$100 billion; afterwards the systems will be built and deployed for additional billions. Through its space shuttles, the US has already embarked on relevant research; the

cooperation, Israeli participation could provide the link for indirectly including apartheid South Africa in imperialism's latest deadly project. In any case, the Reagan Administration can be expected to mount a massive arm-twisting maneuver to rally its allies around Star Wars before the Geneva talks resume in early June. This in itself sets the agenda for the peace movement in the immediate future, and many are already in action.

Though the Geneva talks signify no breakthrough in disarmament due to US blockage, they do contain lessons which can add to the experience of the peace movement. The importance which Reagan attaches to space weapon research should be clue to all. Introducing even the idea of weapons in space is a qualitative upping of the ante in imperialism's nuclear blackmail. Reagan's claim that a space system could constitute a defense, rendering nuclear weapons obsolete, is only for selling the project to the public. Even US experts have warned that such a system could serve several major offensive purposes, including enabling a nuclear first strike. Star Wars is the advanced step in US imperialism's renewed quest to achieve unchallenged nuclear superiority. George Keyworth, Reagan's science adviser, said outright that the new 'defense' system aimed to make «the Soviet (weapons) fleet...obsolete» (as quoted in *Frontline*, April 1st).

This spiraling of the arms race means that protest cannot be limited to a single type of weapon, but must be grounded in principle understanding as to the source of the militaristic drive and its logical consequences. The Geneva arms talks, like events in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Lebanon, Palestine and South Africa, show that it is US imperialism constantly fueling aggression, supporting reactionary forces against the people and imperiling world peace. Moreover, the outrageous costs of Star Wars give anti-imperialists the chance to emphasize the class and racist base of the US war drive. It is working people and oppressed minorities who are forced to pay disproportionately for Reagan's war machine, to be directed against their brothers and sisters around the globe.



Comrade Gorbachev's assuming leadership confirmed the Soviet Union's consistent policy and strength.

claim of Soviet space weapons research is an obvious cover-up for de facto US initiation of weapons in space.

The US fared less well in rallying its allies to Star Wars. Though the defense ministers of the NATO countries welcomed the invitation to join space weaponry research, prominent European politicians have expressed serious doubts, and some allies have declined. It is interesting to note that 'Israel' was among those invited to participate. Prime Minister Peres is positive on the idea, and the major Israeli technological institute supports participation. In view of existing nuclear and other military

The Meaning of Solidarity

Staffan Beckman is a Swedish writer who has contributed greatly to the initiation and development of solidarity with the Palestinian revolution in Scandinavia. He sent us the following article which was originally published in «*Palestina Information*».

In a debate in *Palestina Information*, entitled «Liberation Struggle or Terror?», it has been stated that certain Palestinian military actions in occupied Palestine have caused «hesitation among friends of the Palestinian people.»

In my view, it is necessary to emphasize that the only true friends of the Palestinian people are those who are capable of deeply understanding and identifying with the situation of the Palestinian people - with the strivings and struggle of the Palestinian masses, as well as with the state of oppression and misery in which they live. Those who are thus acting out of *solidarity* give the fighting Palestinians the right to struggle on the basis of the existing conditions in each stage (a right which, by the way, the oppressed and fighting people take, regardless of what people outside may think). This does not mean that those acting out of solidarity give up their own right to pronounce criticism. It is, however, their responsibility to start from the reality of the Palestinian masses and from nothing else, and to hand over any criticism to the Palestinians rather than publicizing it in a way that can be exploited by the oppressors.

Many of the «friends of the Palestinian people», who have felt «hesitation» since the development of the Palestinian resistance in the 1960s, have simply not been guided by solidarity but by compassion, feelings of guilt or other interests of their own. They thereby look upon the Palestinians from above, on the basis of interests which do not coincide with those of the Palestinian masses. Of course, that is not friendship. These people could rather be compared with charity ladies who distribute soup



and second-hand clothes to poor workers' children whose fathers are toiling in factories belonging to the ladies' husbands. Such ladies become as upset and frightened as their husbands, when the workers go on strike or make demonstrations. To this category of alleged friends belong, among others, those 'left-wing Zionists' who advocate some kind of homeland for the Palestinians as long as it does not infringe upon 'Israel' within the borders of 1948.

Yet some of those who have 'hesitations' do surely strive to act from real solidarity, but have difficulties because of lack of knowledge or misleading lines of thought.

In looking at the Palestinian actions, the starting point for every person acting in solidarity has to be that the Palestinian people, from the beginning, have been in an extremely difficult situation in relation to the Zionists and their imperialist allies. 'Israel' is still one of the world's strongest military powers, intimately allied to the USA and its interests. So despite the fact that Palestinian resistance has existed for at least seventy-five years, the liberation struggle is still in its beginning.

Starting in 1910, Palestinian peasants repeatedly attacked the kibbutzim which had occupied their lands. They

shot at farming settlers, ambushed transports, and attacked merry and singing Jews on excursions. Men, women and children were killed - and usually also the Palestinian peasants, who were poorly equipped and badly organized.

How do we view such attacks from a standpoint of solidarity? Of course, from this standpoint the actions are only natural. The criticism is not directed against the Palestinian peasants, but against the colonialists who have taken their lands. Concerning the children who were killed, this must be seen as the responsibility of the parents; it was they who brought their children into a situation based on aggression and violence against the native population.

But still, shouldn't these attacks be criticised as being 'useless', because they have death and misery as their only consequence? No, from the standpoint of solidarity it can be seen that they were not useless. First of all, they were not useless for the peasants who made them. For these Palestinians it was necessary not to accept the aggression; it was necessary to resist, and to try to counterattack even if the chances were not very good. The state of deprival, starvation and despair into which these peasants and their families had fallen, was worse to them than the risks involved in the attack. Secondly, these actions were not useless, because they gave an example to others. They inspired other Palestinians to resist, to get out of this desperate situation.

From the viewpoint of solidarity, it is clear that every such action became a link in the sum of the resistance against oppression. Every Palestinian act of resistance, for the last seventy-five years, lingers behind and inspires the

struggle existing today. For the struggling Palestinians of today, this is their real history; it is the continuing resistance, despite all defeats, which makes up their history. From this history, pride as well as knowledge develops. None of these actions - all of them *necessary* - has been useless; not even those which at the moment might have seemed completely 'wrong' or 'useless'.

But, says a 'hesitant friend', is there really no truth in the question put to Yassir Arafat: «Are you aware that every militant action in Israel gives another vote to LIKUD?»? Isn't it also true that the Palestinian cause is hurt by actions that upset international opinion?

Certainly, is the answer; certainly there is truth in both these thoughts. The question is only if that truth is the most important truth. Of course repression and extreme reactionary tendencies develop from the actions of the oppressed. It was like that in 1910, and it is like that in every situation of oppression. But should this lead to the conclusion that resistance should be given up? No, of course not. There exists no 'should'; what exists is the necessity of resistance, the evident fact that the oppression, the exodus, the massacres, etc., give rise to resistance.

In fact the 'hesitant friends' do not realize that the most important thing is not what occurs within the enemy camp and within international opinion, but what develops among the oppressed and the struggling themselves! The deciding question from the standpoint of solidarity is this: Does a certain action, or certain type of actions, strengthen the Palestinian resistance or not?

We have today a situation where the positions and feelings of the Palestinian people are, to a great extent, still influenced by the barbarian Zionist aggression against Lebanon in 1982. There exists resistance everywhere, in the refugee camps, in Gaza, in the West Bank, in the Galilee. Yet this resistance suffers from a certain demoralization resulting from the massacres in Lebanon, and from a certain confusion concerning the course of the resistance in the new stage. Don't the Palestinians need to get rid of all demoralization and confusion? Don't they need to be strengthened in their faith in the possibility of continuing to develop the resistance? Will that not be the effect if they, for instance, experience how their fedayeen, their avant-garde, manage to act in the center of 'Israel', despite the seemingly total superiority of the

Zionists? Is not the daily resistance in the refugee camps or in the West Bank strengthened? Is not the basic political and organizational work supported by these and other 'spectacular', visible actions? Has there not always existed an important relation between the armed, 'visible' actions and the daily, popular resistance?

Isn't this the most important truth about these actions which lead some friends to hesitate? Of what real importance is it if the Likud gets more votes? Were not all the tragedies that hit the Palestinian people prior to 1977 administered by Zionist governments led by the so-called Workers' Party (Labor)? Has the Palestinian resistance any reason of importance to make a difference between the leading parties in 'Israel'? Should the resistance movement at *this stage*, when 'Israel' still is so strong, start to decide its basic policies according to the small nuances between Peres and Shamir? Isn't it true that such decisions belong to the final stage of a struggle and not to its earlier stages? Incidentally, is it correct to state that 'Israel' is stronger under Likud than under 'Labor'? Is not the opposite correct: That an extreme right-wing government is a sign of the weakness of a society, a sign of deepened contradictions? Isn't it, for instance, good for the Palestinians that immigration slows when Likud is in power?

What about international opinion? In reality, it is not that opinion, but the Palestinians, who are going to liberate Palestine. To have the support of international opinion is of course important; in later stages of struggle, it will be of increasing importance. However, first of all, the Palestinians have to become strong themselves! They have to be strong before it becomes really useful to have the support of international opinion. If not, the effect of a positive opinion could be that it first of all helps Ronald Reagan and other enemies in their efforts to put a lid on the Palestinian question. From another angle: What do the exiled, oppressed and struggling Palestinians think of an opinion which forgets all Zionist barbarism because of a single Palestinian action?

Thus, to real friends of the Palestinian people, the basic thing is always to start from the realities of the Palestinian masses. This is the only way to adhere to a standpoint of solidarity, and the only way to be able to make a difference between matters of primary and secondary importance.

«But they attack civilian targets!» exclaims the 'hesitant friend' finally. Yes, so did those Palestinian peasants who attacked the kibbutz of Degania in 1910, Degania which is situated where the Palestinian village of Umm Juni was destroyed. What are 'civilian targets' in a colonial state? Are kibbutzim and other settlements in the Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and West Bank, civilian targets? If not, when and how were kibbutzim and other settlements created before 1967, changed to 'civilian'? Is, for instance, the ministry of industry, commerce and tourism (that was attacked by the DFLP in April 1984) a civilian target in the sense of an 'innocent target'? Or is it an active colonial institution which, for instance, would never support the creation of a Palestinian or 'Israeli Arab' factory? Is it not the supreme authority concerning the commerce which plunders the occupied West Bank, and uses tourism in order to stimulate the immigration of more colonialists?

Moreover, it is crucial to get rid of all illusions concerning the reports of Palestinian resistance in the 'ordinary' media! Every single thing they publish is turned inside out or upside down. The Palestinians have vast experience with this. They have, among other things, continuously witnessed how the Zionists ruthlessly risk the lives of 'their own people' in order to strengthen their propaganda which changes Palestinian actions into 'senseless massacres'. The Palestinian resistance does not consist of lunatics or ruthless fanatics, but of patriots who are fighting for the freedom and future of their people and their land.

In their thoughts about 'civilian targets', the 'hesitating friends' should first think over what kind of a state 'Israel' is. Yet basically they have to arrive to a position which gives the Palestinians the right to resist and attack even in a stage when they have not yet the strength to always choose 'clearly' military targets. Of course, the point is to realize that every Palestinian action is first and foremost an expression of the situation of the oppressed and of the *continuous Zionist terror*.

There will be a day when the Palestinian liberation movement is strong and developed enough to make attacks that can deepen the contradictions among the Israelis, when more and more Jews will realize that Zionism is only making them into cannon fodder for colonialist and imperialist interests.



Interview with AKEL-Cyprus

At a seminar arranged in Damascus, by «Al Nahj» Arab communist journal, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the defeat of fascism, we had the opportunity to interview Central Committee member Olympios Mikhael of AKEL-the Progressive Party of the Working People of Cyprus (the communist party).

After the latest negotiations between Cyprus President Kyprianou and the Cypriot Turkish leader Denktash, under UN auspices, failed, what is the situation for the Cyprus crisis?

Our party believes that the failure is not only due to the President of the Republic of Cyprus. The imperialists are highly responsible because they provoked the whole problem. The Turkish side also shares responsibility due to its intransigence. We consider that the draft solution provided by the UN Secretary General gives the basis for a solution acceptable to the two communities in Cyprus. The prospects were not fixed in the document of the UN Secretary General, but were to be fixed in this discussion. In our view, the problem of Cyprus cannot be solved outside the framework of the UN. It is preferable to discuss with the Cypriot Turkish side in order to find a solution acceptable to both communities. In this case, Cyprus must become an independent, integral, federal republic. It must continue to be non-aligned, and be totally demilitarized.

We consider this last demand as one of our tasks with international consequences, especially for the Middle East and Mediterranean area. If Cyprus is promoted to a bridgehead for the imperialists, the danger to other peoples around is great. We know that the imperialists would like to transform Cyprus into an advanced NATO base and headquarters for the Rapid Deployment Force. That is why we are fighting for a completely demilitarized Cyprus. This international aspect of the Cyprus problem must be addressed not only by Greek Cypriots, but by Turkish Cypriots as well.

Concerning the problem of our President's refusal to sign the UN document: Some people consider that we are trying to push him out, but this is not the main effort of our party. We are trying to have him sign the document prepared by the UN Secretary General, because

this will open the way to a peaceful solution. Of course, this would not solve all aspects of the Cyprus problem, but it would open the way for a fruitful discussion between our communities, so that the problem could be solved according to the wishes of our people, and not according to the interests of the imperialists.

In the parliament, 66% of the MPs voted for a resolution asking the President to sign the document prepared by the UN Secretary General. So there is now a kind of confrontation between this majority and the minority consisting of the government. Perhaps you know that in December, the President declared that he had stopped the democratic cooperation between the AKEL and DIKO party. We consider that this was on US advice. The Americans spread the illusion that they are going to help solve the Cyprus problem. When the President quit the democratic cooperation, he put his party in the minority, for Akel has more than 33% of the votes; we have 12 out of 35 MPs.

By coincidence, our party's opinion on accepting the UN document is shared by the right wing party. Of course, to avoid confusion, I must say that we have many differences with this party, first of all, political ones, then tactical ones. We stand for a Cyprus that is truly independent. The right wing party stands for a Cyprus closely involved with the West. We do not want Cyprus to be in any bloc, especially not NATO; that is why we prefer that Cyprus is non-aligned. This is a great difference with the right wing party, but since this party took about 33% of the votes, with our 33% this means 66% of the parliament is against the President. This is a political problem. We asked the President either to proceed to sign the document, opening the way to talks with the Turkish side, or apply to the people to see their reaction.

What is the danger to the Cypriot and Mediterranean peoples of the military bases in Cyprus, to

be used by the US Central Command?

The Central Command headquarters are in Turkey, but they would like to make Cyprus the headquarters. That is why the Americans are trying, on the premise that they are going to help solve the Cyprus problem, to appear as friends. They promise that after the solution of the problem, they will give an amount of money that would enable the Cyprus government to compensate those who are not returned to their homes. The US effort to appear as friends is in order to have Cyprus be flexible towards them and allow their use of military bases.

There is another aspect. The military bases are British, and the British are suffering financial difficulties. According to the Zurich-London agreements, if the British are not able to operate the bases, they must be returned to the Republic of Cyprus. The Americans are interfering so as to have the responsibility for operating these bases transferred to them.

We consider it a great task to fight for peace and prevent Cyprus being transformed into a military base for the US. Of course, it is known that in the area occupied by Turkish troops, a very huge military airport is under construction, the biggest in the Middle East area. The US prefers to make use of this base under an agreement with a new Cypriot government, because now the so-called Turkish state is a pseudo-state; it is not recognized. So the US prefers to be given these bases after a solution.

The US plans are not new. For example, twenty years ago, there was a scheme whereby Cyprus would be divided into two, with one part given to Greece and the other to Turkey. The imperialists continue insisting on such a scheme because it means that they could avoid the headache of Cyprus as an independent, non-aligned country. They prefer to join the two parts with the «motherlands», in order to transform Cyprus into a NATO base. Since Turkey

and Greece are members of NATO, this is the easiest way to avoid troubles over this transformation.

Needless to say, our people are against such a solution. In these years, we have organized many manifestations against the bases, calling for their elimination. We organized two very big peace marches from the military bases to Limasol-22 kilometers. Thousands of our people walked for peace, a demilitarized Cyprus and the elimination of the foreign bases. Our people also continue to fight for the withdrawal of all foreign troops and elements: the Turkish occupation troops, and the Turkish, Greek, and British contingents. According to the London-Zurich agreements, contingents of 1000 Greeks, 800 Turks and some thousands of British have the right to stay in Cyprus. That is supposed to be a guarantee for the existence of

Cyprus as a republic. That is the way of cheating the people.

What is your view on the linkage between the Cypriot people and the Middle East problem?

We consider that the problem of Cyprus is closely connected to the problems of the countries of the Middle East, and that the struggles of the peoples are closely connected. The results, whether positive or negative, influence the struggle of the other. Our people feel very closely connected with the Palestinian people, and have organized many activities in solidarity with the Palestinian people and cause.

In principle, we are for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to establish their own independent country. We are not satisfied with the

disunity in the Palestinian ranks. We are for unity but, of course, unity must always stand on principles. All the Palestinians must find a way to join together and strengthen their fight. As a principle, unity is the key to a successful struggle. Of course, you comrades must find the way to discuss among yourselves and to stand on principles regarding the national problem as the most important. Of course, there are other problems, but for the time being they are secondary. The first thing is to succeed in solving the main problem according to the wishes of your people who have made many sacrifices in the struggle. The sacrifices of the Palestinians have great influence on our people, especially the youth. You can consider the Cypriot people as allies, firmly standing beside the Palestinian people for their rights.

Note: Since this interview, Kyprianou has agreed to abide by a collective decision on the negotiations for a settlement, or call a referendum.

CULTURE

Exile

Images Without Homeland

Written and illustrated by Abu Manu

Beirut July 4th 1982

We have been wandering astonished
among uprooted streets and collapsed walls
looking for something
without knowing what is to be found
with this rifle
hanging useless from our soul
under bombs that tear already broken bodies to pieces.
The smoke of that mad summer
piously covered your ravaged mortal remains
BEIRUT.
Naked our passions
mute our fury
formless our pain
in the absurd cruel violence of your fire
the most foolish of animals
ISRAEL.
We have witnessed your great littleness
thief of corpses
you advance in the night
surrounded by the barking of your pack of tanks
ashamed to show yourself.
How much useless pain you brought with you
how many eyes you blinded
how many faces you locked forever in ice.
What people are these your people
who love so much to be hated?

In twenty poems, an internationalist expresses the political and personal feelings of his involvement with the Palestinian people and revolution. The focus is on the siege of Beirut, as in the poem we selected to print here, but many other aspects of the Palestinian experience are touched upon.

The book *Exile: Images Without Homeland* contains these poems in Italian, English and Arabic translation, each with own illustration by the author. It is published by PFLP-General Command's Information Department and can be ordered at \$3 a copy from Ila al Arman Publishing House, P.O.Box 5092, Damascus, Syria.



Short Story

The Jew and the Zionist

This story was sent to us by John Armstrong who is active in the Palestine Solidarity Movement in Australia.

He was interested in finding Himself a small place to live-nothing very much, just a small house and a bit of land to grow some vegetables. He didn't need much. So it seemed like a good idea to see an Agent-someone who knew about the way to handle arrangements. He thought about it for a while, even forgot about it a couple of times, but one day the Agent came looking for Him.

«Hello,» the Agent said, «what do you want?»

«Hello,» He said, «I suppose I'm interested in finding Myself a small place to live-nothing very much, just a small house and a bit of land to grow some vegetables. I don't need much.»

«What is it you want?» said the Agent, «A small place to live? Nothing much? A small house and garden? That's no problem at all.»

«Good,» He said. «I've been a bit forgetful about it and now that I've met you I'd like you to handle the arrangements for Me.»

«That's what we're here for,» said the Agent, «and we'll be happy to help you.»

«Good,» He said.

«Where,» said the Agent, «would you like to live?»

«It's not that important,» He said. «I don't need much.»

«Alright,» said the Agent, «what about this place?»

«It's very nice,» He said. «I think it would be suitable.»

«Of course it is suitable,» said the Agent. «It's made for you.»

«Is it expensive?» He said.

«No,» said the Agent, «it's not expensive at all; in fact, seeing what you've been through, it's not going to cost you a thing.»

«That's very good,» He said, «because after all the things I've been through I think I deserve a nice place.»

«Of course you do,» said the Agent. «If anyone deserves a nice place of their own, it's you.»

«But,» He said, «who does this place belong to?»

«To you,» said the Agent.

«But,» He said, «who did it belong to before Me?»

«No one important,» said the Agent.

«What,» He said, «has happened to them?»

«Well-they are still there,» said the Agent. «They are still there-but not for long.»

«Oh,» He said.

«They will leave,» said the Agent.

«Oh,» He said.

«Because,» said the Agent, «if they don't, we will kill them.»

«Oh,» He said.

«It won't,» said the Agent, «cost you a thing, it's just part of our service.»

«Oh,» He said.

He moved into the little place and thought it was very nice and His vegetables grew very well because the land had been systematically covered with blood and everyone knows that blood is excellent for making everything grow.

by John Armstrong

