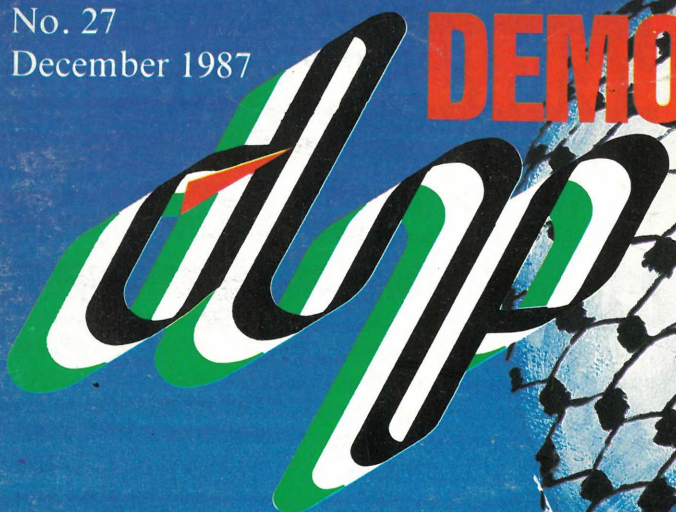
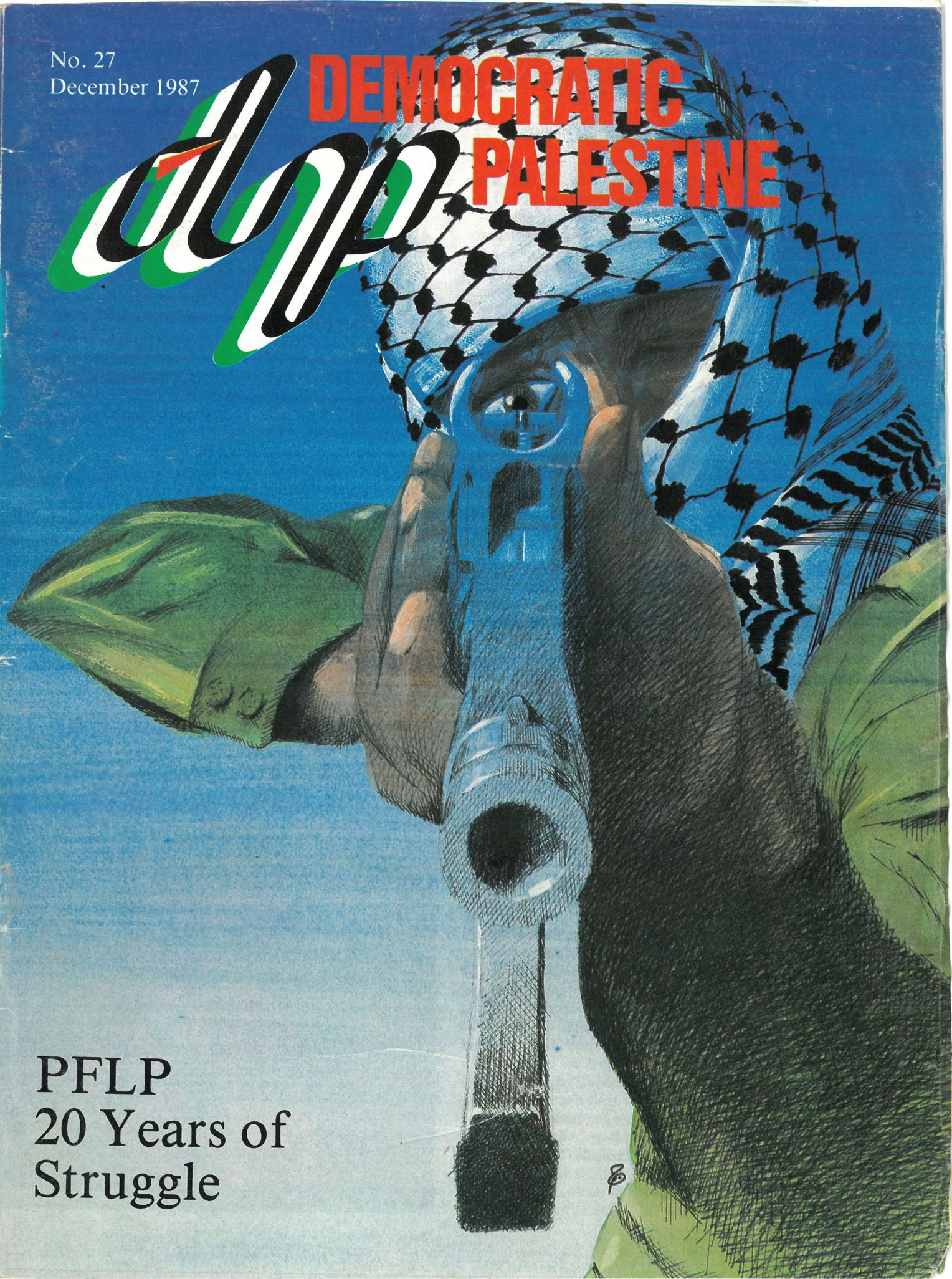


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DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE



PFLP
20 Years of
Struggle





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

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- Providing current information and analysis pertinent to the Palestinian liberation struggle, as well as developments on the Arab and international levels;
- Serving as a forum for building relations of mutual solidarity between the Palestinian revolution and progressive organizations, parties, national liberation movements and countries around the world.

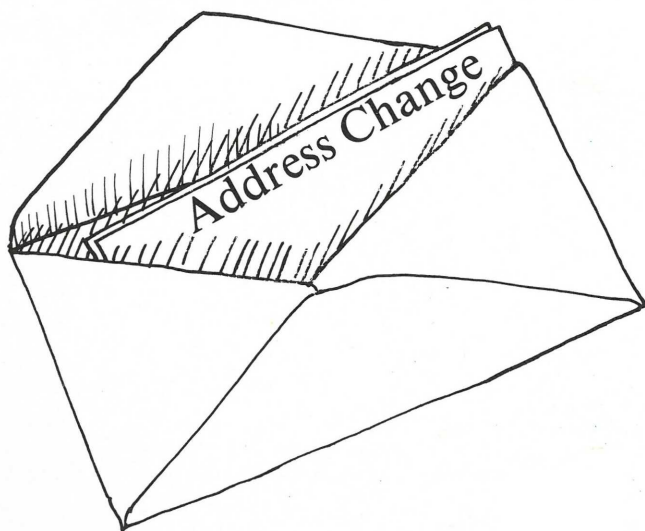
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PFLP Calendar 1988



PFLP Politbureau communique

The following are excerpts from the communique issued by the PFLP's Politbureau in celebration of the PFLP's 20th anniversary.

We celebrate today 20 years of continuous struggle. Twenty years of distinguished struggle in the PFLP's theoretical vision, political stands and closeness to the Palestinian masses. The PFLP took an opposite direction to the capitulationist thinking that the imperialist-Zionist-reactionary alliance attempted to impose on our masses and the Arab region.

Twenty years have passed, full of insistant struggle for our national cause and for achieving our masses goals of return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Throughout the past twenty years, the PFLP has been a stern defender of our just cause, and an important contributor in our Palestinian people's victories. Twenty years of continuous struggle by the PFLP to safeguard the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and to combat all attempts of political elimination and containment of the PLO.

Twenty full years of military and political struggle against the Zionist enemy and against all forms of political and military attacks against our people and cause.

The twentieth anniversary of the PFLP comes at a time of intensified imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary aggression aiming at eliminating the PLO and the Palestinian cause, and to expand the capitulationist trend in the whole region. And this enemy alliance is taking full advantage of the declining official Arab policies and of the spread of the capitulationist logic of the rightist and reactionary Arab circles. The Jordanian regime is taking advantage of the results of «Israel's» 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the escalation of the Iran-Iraq war, is continuing its drive to execute its capitulationist policies, seeking to facilitate the proper atmosphere for direct negotiations with the Zionist enemy under Washington's auspices. And in addition to its attempts to attain official Arab blessings for its moves, the Jordanian regime seeks as well to obtain a Palestinian blessing for them. While these political moves were intensifying, the Palestinian people were confronting great challenges and dangers.

In the occupied homeland, the Zionist enemy continued intensifying its iron-fist policy. The confiscation of land increased, and more settlements were established. The Zionist intensified and escalated oppressive measures aimed at creating suitable conditions for stopping our masses' upgraded struggle and to facilitate the progress of the joint Israeli-Jordanian plans.

In Lebanon, the Palestinian masses in the camps have faced for the past two years continuous aggressive wars aiming at eliminating the nationalist Palestinian armed presence. These wars have only weakened the nationalist Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian alliance, at a time when all confrontation forms and efforts should be united against the US plans and the increased US military presence in the region.

The resolutions of the Amman Arab summit have come as a clear indication of the declining level of official Arab policies.

The resolutions of this summit, particularly the one concerning relations with Egypt, have opened the road for a more comprehensive and dangerous decline. And this decline is clearly manifested in the acceptance of the major Arab countries of the Camp David trend and the bilateral solutions.

Despite this situation, the Palestinian revolution with the glorious struggle of our masses outside and inside the occupied homeland, has succeeded in foiling these hostile plans and maintaining the role and status of the Palestinian factor in the ongoing conflict as an obstacle to all attempts to spread the Camp David trend.

Due to the efforts of the nationalist and democratic Palestinian forces and the support of all allies and friendly countries and forces, the unification session of the PNC was held and the PLO's unity was restored on a nationalist base opposing imperialist-Zionist-reactionary plans. The reunification of the PLO rehabilitated the PLO's prestige and alliances, causing the failure of all hostile plans.

In the meantime, our Palestinian masses have continued their heroic uprising in the occupied territories and their confrontations against the Zionist-Jordanian plans and all attempts to eliminate the nationalist Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon.

The decline of the official Arab policies, the intensification of the attempts to eliminate the PLO and the Palestinian cause and the oppression of any uprising signs in the Arab region, only necessitate facilitating the requirements of the comprehensive nationalist confrontation, which could be achieved by the following tasks.

The first task requires the consolidation and strengthening of the PLO's unity based on its political and organizational program and the resolutions of the PNC's unification session. This requires the joint efforts of all Palestinian nationalist and democratic forces to impose adherence to the PNC resolutions and enact democratic organizational reforms in the PLO's institutions. In addition to that the road should be paved for other Palestinian forces to join the PLO. Achieving this task undoubtedly requires adherence to the political and organizational resolutions.

The second task is to continue the armed struggle against the Zionist enemy. And consolidating the unity of the Palestinian masses and institutions in the occupied homeland and to upgrade the level of confrontation against the occupation and the attempts to create substitutes to the PLO. The third task is to expend all efforts to restore the Palestinian-Syrian relations.

The fourth task is to restore the role of the nationalist Palestinian-Syrian-Lebanese alliance. And this requires an immediate halt to the camp wars and to formulate the nationalist Lebanese-Palestinian relations on clear bases. The fifth task is to upgrade the level of cooperation and coordination between the nationalist Arab regimes and forces. The sixth task is to stop the Iraq-Iran war through a peaceful solution based on Security Council resolution 598.

The seventh and final task is to consolidate and strengthen the PLO's alliances, on the international level with the socialist countries, at the forefront the USSR, and improve the level of cooperation and alliances between the nationalist Arab forces and regimes, the socialist countries and the peace, liberation and progressive forces in the world supportive of the Palestinian people's just cause.

The PFLP, while highly praising the firm and principled positions of the USSR concerning our people's struggle, appreciates the peaceful Soviet initiatives leading to the agreement to eliminate medium-range and short-range nuclear weapons, as the first step towards protecting humanity from the dangers of a nuclear war.

The success of the imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary aggression in this region is not inevitable. In contrast to the official policies' decline, bright signs have emerged and proved the Arab nation's capabilities. Our Palestinian people's upris-

ing in the occupied homeland the heroic struggle of the Lebanese National Resistance Front, and the Palestinian military operations in the occupied homeland, the latest being the heroic hang-glider operation, all these facts point out the possibilities of success in foiling all hostile plans.

On the 20th anniversary, the PFLP promises to continue the struggle until total victory and the achievement of the national goals of the Palestinian people of return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on Palestine.»

Interview with Comrade George Habash

On the occasion of the PFLP's 20th anniversary, Secretary General Comrade George Habash gave an exclusive interview to *Al Hadaf* and *Democratic Palestine*

Twenty years after the PFLP's establishment, can you describe the circumstances in which it was formed. What were the expectations that motivated the decision to establish the Front?

The idea to establish the PFLP arose due to the results of the 1967 war, when the Zionist enemy succeeded in occupying the rest of Palestine, in addition to the Sinai and the Golan Heights. This made the Arab and Palestinian masses disillusioned with the nationalist bourgeois regimes, headed at that time by Nasser's regime in Egypt. The masses were shocked by the defeat and the new Zionist expansion, and by the failure of the nationalist bourgeois project spearheaded by the Egyptian regime. The question was what to do to restore our masses' self-confidence and restore the credibility of our slogans.

In order to liberate Palestine, struggle by all means was needed... at that time, the PLO was not the same as it is now - it was not a front-like framework led by the armed resistance organizations, it was only a few years old. The masses had no confidence in it. It did not represent the Palestinian people's will. Nor was it a suitable framework for mobilizing their capabilities for the liberation struggle. It had been established by the Arab regimes, which made it difficult to imagine that it could escape their control. This is not meant to belittle the importance of the PLO's having been established... But the requirements of truth make us point out the many reservations and questions that remained... Faced with this situation, we made our decision to initiate new revolutionary action whereby the Palestinian people could practice their will by fighting to liberate their homeland.

In these circumstances, it was natural to think of establishing a national front, representing the vanguard Palestinian forces, to restore the prominence of the Palestinian role which had been overlooked from 1948 until 1967. The time had come for a new revolutionary response, with a different class nature, capable of facing the new challenges. We saw the Algerian people's revolution as an inspiration, as well as the experience of the Yemeni masses in the South, who achieved independence in 1967.

A POPULAR FRONT

We engaged in contacts with all Palestinian forces and organizations that were preparing for armed struggle to liberate Palestine through protracted people's war. The most important organizations were Fatah, the Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement, the Heros of Return, the Palestine Liberation Front, the Palestinian branch of the Baath Party and more than twenty smaller factions. This abundance of factions reflected the Palestinian people's awakening.

The name, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, did not emerge at that time, for the negotiations which were held among Palestinian organizations in Damascus aimed at forming a fighting, nationalist, people's front. We wanted to include all Palestinian forces, also Fatah, but the dialogue did not end in agreement to form such a front. Fatah refused to participate, so the only choice then was to work with the organizations that agreed to forming a unified front. Thus, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine was formed from the Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement (the Youth of Revenge), the Heros of Return, the Palestine Liberation Front and a number of independent nationalists.

When we first thought of establishing the PFLP after the June defeat, the expectations were that this front would include all fighting Palestinian organizations, as had happened in Algeria (the Algerian National Liberation Front) and the National Liberation Front that achieved the independence of South Yemen. We never thought that we would be building a Marxist-Leninist party. The idea of transformation was not introduced at that time. When the PFLP's establishment was declared, it was clear that it was a front including the greatest possible number of existing Palestinian fighting organizations, and which aimed to continue working with Fatah in a unified front. This is what happened in 1968, when we reached an agreement that made the PLO a front-like framework led by the fighting organizations, without losing the PLO's representative capacity as a member of the Arab League.

From the start, we didn't plan to form a party called the PFLP.

We wanted to form a broad national popular front including all fighting Palestinian organizations. Since we were not able to achieve this aim due to Fatah's rejection of this formula, the ensuing developments, like the Palestine Liberation Front's withdrawal and the withdrawal of some independents, served to advance the idea of transforming the PFLP into a working class party, and making the PLO the broad popular framework.

Concerning our aspirations and expectations, we didn't imagine that liberating Palestine would be a short picnic.

Based on our understanding of Zionism, its ideology, practice and alliance with imperialism, we knew well that the liberation process would be tough, bitter and historic. Experience has proved the importance of constantly clarifying



this fact to our masses, so that they understand the complexity of this process and are prepared to fight a long-term battle until liberating the homeland.

Do you think that the initiative to form the PFLP was correct at that time? Did you arrive at a correct balance between the Palestinian and the Arab nationalist dimension in the Palestinian struggle. Or did the decision come too late?

I think it came late. We, as the Palestinian branch of the Arab National Movement had thought of practicing armed struggle and people's war against the Zionist enemy since 1964, as evidenced by the 1964 of the martyr, Khaled Abu Aisha, whom the PFLP considers its first martyr.

We deeply believed in the necessity of armed struggle as a method for which there is no substitute in liberating Palestine. At the same time, we saw the need for coordinating with the Nasserite leadership, because we could not envision a comprehensive confrontation of the enemy camp without a connection between Palestinian action and the Arab national liberation movement which was then headed by Nasser's Egypt... We prepared to start the armed struggle, but at the same time we understood that this was subject to coordination with Nasser's Egypt.

I remember a meeting with Abdel Nasser in early 1964, when we as vanguard forces had started to realize the dilemma of Nasserism despite the masses adherence to Nasser's leadership. I had two proposals at the meeting, after presenting a long analysis of Nasserism's. The first suggestion dealt with the armed struggle in South Yemen where the October revolution had started in 1963. At that time, we did not envision its triumph without Nasser's support... I reviewed the early period of the armed struggle and the need for supporting it. The second suggestion dealt with the Palestinian armed struggle, the necessity of initiating it.

Nasser's response to the first suggestion was that he expressed readiness to give support; he suggested starting gradually, after having seen if the conditions are suitable... Concerning the Palestinian issue, I still remember his exact words. He said that «the issue of «Israel» is more complicated than many people think. As I have said on many occasions, I don't have a plan to liberate Palestine, for the battle against Israel is at the same time the battle against US imperialism.» The discussion between us was honest, clear and cordial. Nasser stressed that armed struggle against the Zionist enemy needs deep and long thinking, and finding suitable conditions. It was obvious that he was not enthusiastic or approving of my suggestion to initiate armed struggle against the Zionist enemy. But to us, this issue was very important, so we arrived at a formula with Nasser allowing for preparations for armed struggle.

To us, this meant to start training, reconnaissance, moving arms, etc.

Over the past two decades, the Front has passed through several stages. Can you evaluate these?

The first stage was the formative one which I spoke about when telling how the PFLP was formed as a framework for the Palestinian people's movement, not only as a political party, and how the circumstances following the 1967 defeat gave birth to this idea.

The second stage started with the withdrawal of the Palestine Liberation Front, to establish what has become the PFLP-General Command. As a result of their withdrawal, the PFLP became the Palestinian branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement, because the remaining component (Heros of Return) was a secondary organization with origins in the ANM as well. As a result, a qualitative transformation occurred in how the PFLP viewed itself. It was no longer a united front of all the classes and stratas of the revolution, like the Vietnamese or Algerian models. Instead, this chance receded, and the Front became mainly an essential organization among the organizations of the Palestinian revolution. One can ask why we maintained the same name... In its first year, the Front succeeded in accumulating a big record of political and military struggle, and it acquired the people's trust.

We aspired to maintain this record, but we realized that we

were one organization of the revolution and behaved in this way.

The biggest question we asked ourselves at that time was: What is the political, ideological and social nature of our organization? We outlined our answer in the light of developments experienced by the Palestinian branch of the ANM, ideologically and class-wise. We considered ourselves an organization of the Palestinian working class, i.e., the organization that represented the ideology and political thinking of the working class. In short, the second stage meant keeping the name PFLP, despite the realization that we were an organization of the working class...

The third stage witnessed intensification of internal discussion between the leading figures of the Palestinian branch of the ANM.

These discussions focused on whether or not the PFLP, given its new situation after the PLF's withdrawal, could be transformed into a working class organization. There were two viewpoints. The first viewpoint was held by those who still lead the PFLP. They maintained that the PFLP could be transformed into a leftist, Marxist-Leninist party, representing the Palestinian working class. They held that in the transformation process, although it might be long, the PFLP would be able to acquire Marxist-Leninist theory.

The second viewpoint maintained that this was impossible, that PFLP, as a petit bourgeois party, could not be transformed into a working class party. The maximum they thought could be reached by the PFLP was to have leftist elements, but not to become a Marxist-Leninist party. This stage ended with the group holding this view splitting from the PFLP in February 1969, to form the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Naturally, this was not the only issue of contradiction that caused the split. There were many political and organizational differences, but the main issue that led to the split was the issue of transformation. I thought that we could have managed to solve the political and organizational differences had the viewpoints on the transformation process been reconciled.

The fourth stage: After the DFLP's split, the PFLP entered the fourth stage in its development - the stage of transforming into a Marxist-Leninist party, a party for the Palestinian working class. We are still in this stage which is near successful conclusion. This stage, which started after February 1969, is divided into several substages, which we can review through our national congresses: The second congress, which was held in February 1969, issued «The Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine», which outlined the PFLP's aspirations and future (organizational) form.

Between February 1969 and March 1972, the PFLP's leadership worked to crystallize the Front's leftist nature through its political positions and slogans, whether concerning the position on the Jordanian regime, the Jordanian masses and nationalist forces, or the PFLP's understanding of the concept of Palestinian national unity. In all these positions, we worked to crystallize our leftist political identity as a Palestinian organization for the working class.

In the third congress, in March 1972, we reviewed the organizational structure of the PFLP and outlined the big shortcomings in this. We examined the factors of this shortcoming and outlined organizational guidelines to overcome this. The congress adopted the internal rules and regulations of the PFLP, which are the rules for a communist party. Then started the long, hard process of advancing the organizational

situation of the Front to the level outlined in the internal rules and regulations, particularly to enact democratic centralism which is the basis for all working class parties. This was one of the most difficult stages through which the Front has passed, and many questions were raised about its capability to succeed in the transformation process. However, around 1979, we began to feel that we had successfully passed this stage.

In the fourth congress, April 1981, we were able to register our satisfaction with the progress we had achieved in the transformation process, on both the political and organizational levels. We outlined the headlines for our future tasks: to conclude the transformation process by strengthening the theoretical knowledge of our leadership and cadres.

These are the stages undergone by the Front in its transformation into a Marxist-Leninist party. As you noted, they were intertwined. It is difficult to totally separate the one from the other. I have simply distinguished them in terms of our main concern at each stage...

THE PFLP AND THE SPLITS

Who was responsible for the splits in the PFLP? What caused them and were they inevitable or not? To what extent has the Front overcome the possibility of splits in the future?

First, let us distinguish between what happened in 1968, when the PLF withdrew, and what happened in 1969, when a group split to form the DFLP. In the first case, it was not split, but the termination of a partnership between several organizations, exactly like when the PFLP terminated its partnership with the Salvation Front in April 1987... As for the second case, it was a real split. A group from our ranks split and formed a new organization, after it was impossible for them to coexist with the mother organization, especially since the differences focused on a central issue, that of transformation.

In 1972, the PFLP again faced a split by a group which called itself the Popular Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of Palestine, but this was of little importance in terms of this group's size or political-theoretical ideas. The disappearance of this organization from the Palestinian political scene proves its weakness, but in any case, it was a split.

The PFLP has constantly reviewed this issue of splits. In the past, we laid all the blame on the group that split. We used to study the reasons behind the split, as claimed by the splitting group. We blamed left opportunism or selfishness or factionalism, etc., as the causes for the split. However, with the advance in the transformation process, we have changed our way of analyzing this issue and its causes. In the organizational report of the fourth national congress, we said that in addition to the factors for which the splitting group bears the main responsibility, the internal situation of the PFLP's leading bodies at that time was also partly responsible for the splits.

I believe that given the state of the Front's leadership at the time, these splits could not have been prevented. Had the situation been different, we might have succeeded in containing and minimizing them. Today, after two decades, history has given us an answer to the outcome of this experience. Had the PFLP disappeared or shifted to the right or remained in bourgeois ideology and practice, we could say that the viewpoint of the comrades of the DFLP was correct. However, since the contrary has occurred, and the Front has made great progress in the transformation, to a Marxist-Leninist party, the PFLP's viewpoint was proven correct. I don't want to go into details in

this evaluation of the outcome of the split, but I have two questions. The first is: What was the qualitatively new thing which the DFLP represented in the Palestinian arena? The second is: What was the effect of that split on the conflict between the Palestinian left and right, at that time and today?

As for the future, I can say with confidence that the PFLP has overcome the experience of splits. The greatest proof of this is that all the rumors of impending splits in the PFLP over the past ten years, and especially after 1982, have proved to be mere illusions on the part of those who spread these rumors. Having courageously studied the experience of the past split, the PFLP today views with great satisfaction the high level of political, organizational and ideological unity in our ranks. We are confident that all these illusions and rumors will be shattered on the rocks of our unity.

TRANSFORMATION

How far has the transformation process come?

I believe that our coming fifth congress will deal with the big question: Did we conclude the transformation process, or do we still need more time to achieve this goal? Personally, I will be supporting the viewpoint, based on knowledge, that the transformation process has proceeded successfully, and that we have become one of the models for the transformation of a revolutionary democratic organization into a communist organization; that we have concluded or are near the conclusion of the transformation process.

The yardstick for measuring the correctness of this judgement is how the Leninist principles are practiced. The most important of these principles concern the party's ideological and class nature, its adherence to the principle of democratic centralism, the practice of criticism and self-criticism, etc. Evaluating the PFLP by this scientific yardstick, I can confirm that we have concluded, or nearly concluded the transformation process, and this will be my viewpoint at the fifth congress...

The process of concluding the transformation over the coming years is intertwined with two main tasks. The first of these is to consolidate relations between the Palestinian revolutionary democratic forces, so that they become the guarantee of the revolution... We deeply believe in the necessity of unifying the Palestinian left in order to build the united Palestinian communist party.

The second task is to struggle on two fronts. The first front is to strengthen the political line of the PLO in order to maintain its nature as a liberation movement opposing imperialism and Zionism, and to confront any deviationist trends. The second front is to consecrate democratic principles in the PLO's institutions and bodies. These tasks may need several years to achieve.

Does the role played by the PFLP today measure up to the original expectations at the time of its foundation?

I want to answer this honestly and clearly. We have hoped to have a bigger role among the masses and in the revolution and the PLO. However, there are reasons for the gap between our dreams and the reality.

First, in Jordan, the revolution was made up of two main groups, and we succeeded in making the left a competitive and

equal pole in relation to the right. We have worked so that the positions of the working class in the revolution would be distinguished in programs, organization and behaviour, in contrast to the bourgeois program represented by Fatah... Despite the bitter experience of the splits, we succeeded in maintaining this competitive pole... This was expressed spontaneously in the slogan shouted by the masses at that time: «For national unity - Fatah and Popular Front.»

Second, in Lebanon, the situation was somehow different, especially with the PLO's achievements, like its gaining Arab and international recognition. This helped the influential (bourgeois) pole in the PLO to exploit these achievements to its own advantage. Here we should point out that the alliance between the Palestinian right, which was leading the PLO, and the Arab right is organic. It stems from many factors, mainly the Arab right's need for a Palestinian cover for its capitulationist policies. Naturally, this alliance provided the Palestinian right with great material support, including arms, which helped the balance of forces in the Palestinian arena to tilt in its favor.

After 1982, the importance of the Palestinian revolution's primary operation base, i.e., occupied Palestine, was increased. The PFLP gained more strength in the Palestinian balance of forces, due to its influence in occupied Palestine, which gave it a bigger role among the masses and in the revolution...

The important thing here is that we have always hoped the Palestinian left would have a bigger role in the revolution, because we believe that the left is the guarantee for protecting the Palestinian national achievements and for the revolution's continuation... Again, I want to reaffirm that the Palestinian right and left are in a state of national unity in confronting the enemy camp, and especially the Zionist enemy.

THE PLO

The relationship between the PFLP and the PLO has fluctuated over the years. Can you describe the most prominent stages in this relationship and explain these fluctuations?

Participating or not participating in the PLO institutions and leading bodies cannot be the only measure of the PFLP's relationship to the PLO, although it is an essential measure. This phenomenon, connected to the political and organizational conflict in the PLO, was never an expression of change in the PFLP's position towards the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Participation in the PNC is among the essential criteria for adherence to the PLO, but it should be clear to all that the PFLP participated in the PNC except for a few specific occasions and for specific reasons that had nothing to do with the PFLP's conviction in the importance of the PLO. We did not participate in the 5th and 17th sessions of the PNC; we participated only symbolically in the 6th session. In all others, we participated, which shows that our lack of participation has been minimal.

In fact, our literature has always outlined the reasons for our not participating in these sessions. Concerning the fifth session, we proposed during the discussions to include Arab reaction in the enemy camp. We had in mind the upcoming battle with the Jordanian regime and the need for a scientific understanding of Arab reaction's position on the Palestinian revolution. To us, this issue was not superficial or unimpor- ►

tant; nor was it an issue that could be discussed with the same ease that we now discuss things. Despite our not participating in this session, I remember that we organized forty seminars in Jordan to explain our position, saying that we are replacing our non-participation in the PNC session with forty «PNCs».

Concerning the 17th session, everybody knows that other organizations, including the Democratic Front, joined us in boycotting this session, for reasons which are well known, particularly in view of the dominance of a particular political line at this session which was held in Amman (1984), which led to the rightist trend's continuing its political option which ultimately led to the signing of the Amman accord with the Jordanian regime.

Concerning the Executive Committee, we boycotted it during the period between the PNC's 12th and 14th sessions. During this period, we all remember the slogan raised by Fatah, which controlled the PLO leadership, for keeping things as they were, i.e., keeping us outside the Executive Committee.

The question might be raised as to the reasons for the PFLP's non-participation... What were our aims with non-participation on certain occasions, and what were the real reasons for this behaviour? A review of the PFLP's literature shows that our non-participation was due to our convictions concerning essential political and organizational issues. We felt we had to use all methods available in order to have certain issues adopted in the PLO in a manner that would consolidate national unity and promote the PLO's goals. Despite our constant adherence to the process of political and organizational reform, we were not the decision-makers in the PLO.

Everybody talks about hegemony in the PLO leadership and the absence of democratic practices in its institutions. What then could we do when we face a serious political or organizational issue not approved by the hegemonic leadership. The fact was that after expending all efforts, and failing to have these positions adopted, we used this tactic of non-participation in order to bring the discussions being held behind closed doors out in public. This was a way of saying to our masses that there is an important question which keeps us from participating in the PNC, or the Executive Committee, and this question concerns not only us, but concerns first and foremost the Palestinian masses. We were seeking to draw the masses' attention to the problem presented by the hegemony in the PLO leadership, and the political and organizational results of this hegemony.

Forming the PLO's institutions and leading bodies on democratic front-like principles, that guarantee collective decision-making, is the only way to prevent the occurrence of this phenomenon. The continuation of the hegemony does not preclude the PFLP from using this tactic again.

If the PFLP's non-participation is disturbing, the hegemony and non-democratic methods used in the PLO are more disturbing. Consolidating Palestinian national unity requires a radical treatment of the political and organizational misconduct.

Concerning the PFLP's mistakes in dealing with the PLO, everybody knows from experience that we are not among those organizations that claim to always be correct. Our literature includes a review of the mistakes we have committed.

Could we say that after 20 years in the PLO, the PFLP's use of the weapon of non participation produced the desired results?

Theoretically yes. During the period that preceded the convening of the April 1987 session of the PNC, the front succeeded, by its decisive adherence to some political and organisational issues, in having the PNC cancel the Amman accord. In addition to some other resolutions that opposed the imperialist solutions and rehabilitated the PLO's alliances and national program.

We have also won the political battle when the Rejectionist Front was formed. We won by interconnecting the transitional solution with the strategic solution of the revolution.

But winning a battle comes only as a result of the political developments which force the influential rightist trend in the PLO to correct its political stands. For example, when the issue of classifying the Arab reaction in the camp of the enemies was subject to discussions at the 5th session of the PNC, we succeeded later in having the PNC adopt this classification only because the Jordanian regime had started its war of attrition against the Palestinian resistance movement. But naturally winning theoretically is different from winning practically. The rightist trend in the PLO never adhered to the resolutions.

The issue of the Palestinian national action leadership's crisis has been raised for years. Aren't you a part of this leadership? Does this crisis apply to the Palestinian left's leadership as well?

There is a difference between the bourgeoisie's dilemma in leading the national work and the difficulties that face the working class when leading this work. The dilemma of the Palestinian national movement is a part of the Arab Liberation movement's crisis. The crisis lies in both movements in the class nature of this leadership, and in the particular dilemma of the revolutionary alternative to this leadership. The continuing difficulties the Left faces contribute to extending the Palestinian national action leadership's dilemma. The historical role of the bourgeoisie has declined. It is no longer capable of continuing and concluding the national and democratic liberation tasks. At some times this class can't even maintain what was achieved. Concerning the Palestinian struggle, the great difficulties we face in this stage, could lead the Palestinian bourgeoisie to favor a political settlement with the enemy before concluding the political liberation stage. This could be seen in the political position taken by the rightist trend following the Palestinian forces' withdrawal from Beirut in 1982.

The concept of the crisis as talked about does not apply to the Left. Despite the difficulties the Left faces, the future for the Left is wide open. The Palestinian Left, due to its ideological and class nature, will continue the battle against the enemy until total victory.

It is worth pointing out that the Palestinian Left was not born as materialized Left. The process of transformation governs the Left's development. This means that the Left could have many mistakes and shortcomings which could delay reaching its historical status as the leader of the Palestinian national action.

The scopes for the Palestinian Left to take control of the revolution's leadership are subjected to several factors. First, this process is a historical one. And during this long process the achievements of the Left are accumulated until reaching these goals. Second, taking control of the revolution requires the consolidation of the Palestinian revolutionary democratic forces' efforts on all levels, ideological, political and

organizational to achieve the unity of these forces. To that end, the Front has expended great efforts since the 4th national congress (1981) to pave the road for the Palestinian Left's unity.

The Islamic trend is growing fast inside and outside the occupied territories. Do you think this trend will have the chance to control the PLO?

First I would like to express my deepest appreciation for the phenomenon of the «Jihad Islami» (the Islamic Jihad) in occupied Palestine for the many painful blows it dealt to the Zionist enemy. And we extend our hands for cooperation against the Zionist enemy. I agree with the evaluation that this trend is growing inside and outside the occupied homeland. And this phenomenon does not apply only to the Palestinian arena. It is rather a phenomenon that is extending to many areas in the Arab world and some developing countries.

The causes for this trend's growth lie in the problems and difficulties that face the socio-economic liberation process, the development problems and the weakness of the working class parties. This situation forces the masses to turn to any path they think could achieve their aspirations. During the Nasserite era, this trend had no chance of growing this fast, because the masses saw in Nasser's leadership the mean to achieve their aspirations. But when this leadership failed to conclude the socio-economic liberation process, the masses turned to other trends.

We could add to these factors the victory achieved by the Iranian revolution. This experience was an inspiration to the masses, and its effects extended to parts of the Arab and Islamic world. Another factor was the imperialist and Arab reactionary encouragement of the fundamentalist forces to serve their interests, mainly to face the growing influence and strength of the nationalist and Marxist forces in the area. Saudi Arabia poured material support to these forces. The Egyptian regime of Anwar Sadat encouraged the Islamic force's growth for some time in Egypt. The Jordanian regime facilitated the activities of the Islamic Brotherhood and other forces in Jordan. But it is worth mentioning that the Islamic Jihad is different from those other forces. While the other Islamic forces direct their activities against nationalist and progressive forces in occupied Palestine, the Islamic Jihad concentrates its activities against the Zionist enemy.

In the light of the results of the April 1987 unification session of the PNC, the PLO should continue the political and organizational reforms. This would promote the PLO's role, status and forms of struggle, namely escalating the armed struggle. The Islamic trend has the chance to control the Palestinian scene once the PLO stops the armed struggle and deviates from its nationalist program. In addition to the working class inability to be an alternative leadership. Palestinian masses would undoubtedly turn towards the forces the masses think could achieve their aspirations.

What is the PFLP's understanding of the «Palestinian Entity» and «independent Palestinian decision-making»?

Concerning the Palestinian Entity in this particular stage of our struggle, the PFLP views that confronting the imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary plan requires emphasizing the in-

dependant Palestinian entity and identity and insisting on establishing the independent Palestinian state on our national soil. The Zionist project is based on negating the existence of the Palestinian people and to assimilate the Palestinians in the state of «Israel» to become Israelis, while those Palestinians in the 1967 occupied territories be assimilated with Jordan. As for the Palestinians outside the occupied Palestine, they should according to the Zionist plan, assimilate in some Arab society or other societies. Confronting this project necessitates emphasizing the independent Palestinian identity and entity.

Despite our deep convictions that our fight against this Zionist enemy has pan-Arab national dimensions, there remains the peculiarity of this Zionist danger against the Palestinian people. This peculiarity resulted in the materialization of a Palestinian national identity and entity. And this can be clearly seen in the Palestinian masses', whether in the 1948 occupied territories, 1967 occupied territories or elsewhere, adherence to the PLO as their sole legitimate representative. Thus, safeguarding the PLO as the materialization of this Palestinian entity becomes a necessity.

Concerning the slogan of the independent Palestinian decision-making, it was raised in contrast to the strategy of the Arab regimes, the classical war strategy and against the Arab regime's logic of waiting until preparations for this war are completed. Despite that, the Palestinian people realize well that liberating Palestine is a task for the whole Arab nation. And that the process of liberation could only be developed through the joint efforts and capabilities of the Arab nation in this struggle. Therefore, the decision of peace or war is an Arab national decision that is taken by the Palestinian revolution in cooperation and coordination with all sincere Arab forces.

The PFLP is viewed as a hard-liner towards the Palestinian positions. It is also viewed as an organization that accepts what has been rejected in the past. What is your explanation?

As a national liberation movement, all Palestinian classes and strata, and the nationalist political forces representing them, join in the battle against the common enemy. But there is a law that governs the relationship between all these forces. It is the law of conflict and alliance. Understanding this scientific law draws to the conclusion that we as a national liberation movement have our internal differences, but are united against the enemy.

I agree with your question that the PFLP is a hard-liner towards the Palestinian positions. The Front attempts by that to gain the broadest mass support in order to steer the conflict in a direction that would achieve the minimum level of success. But after that, the circumstances force the Palestinian forces to unite. Misunderstanding this law sometimes makes the PFLP's positions unclear, and thus questions are raised.

It should be understood, that by joining the unity framework, the PFLP does not accept those policies it had rejected in the past. An example to this is the conflict period that the Palestinian political arena had lived through from 1983 until the PNC's unification session in April 1987. Is it true that the PFLP accepted in April 1987 the policies it rejected before that? The answer naturally is no. The Palestinian national unity achieved in April 1987 was based on the cancellation of the

Amman accord, specific organizational reforms and other PNC resolutions. The PFLP wages the conflict on strength and principles, and unites on the same basis.

In addition to the law of conflict and alliance, another reason lies behind this phenomenon. The PFLP sometimes makes mistakes and misjudgements, and based on these misjudgements the Front takes wrong stands. The PFLP courageously admits those errors, unlike other organizations which have the illusion that they never make mistakes. We make mistakes, but when we discover them, we correct them publicly.

An example was our stand after the rightist trend in the PLO signed the Amman accord with the Jordanian regime. We thought that the rightist trend had accepted the Jordanian conditions and that a bilateral settlement with «Israel» was destined. But after King Hussein's February 19th 1986 speech, in which he ceased the coordination with the rightist trend, we realized that the settlement road was a rocky road and that the new objective conditions have paved the road for restoring the PLO's unity on clear political and organizational lines.

I would like to clarify another point. The political movement is a vacillating one. Consequently the PFLP formulates its stands with the new political developments in mind. This vacillation requires that the PFLP's stands change as well.

What became of the slogan «liberating all of Palestine»? What are the prospects for such a slogan given the fact that «Israel» now is a nuclear power?

The world has known for a long time that «Israel» owns nuclear weapons. We also realize the great development in the Zionist military strategy and technology. And we realize that these facts will reflect themselves on our struggle and would add more obstacles.

The most important goals of this nuclear blackmail is to create the willingness to surrender in the Arab and Palestinian minds. But at the same time several considerations should be taken into mind. First, the US nuclear deterrence strategy failed in Vietnam. And Washington failed also in preventing other nations during the detente era from gaining their independence and liberation. Second, the Israeli nuclear blackmail strategy will become not only a problem for the Palestinian people but an international problem as well, threatening world peace. Third, «Israel» realizes that using nuclear weapons would undoubtedly be a threat to itself as well. I am not playing down the danger of this situation, this weapon or the obstacle it adds to our struggle path, but I believe that this threat will never prevent the process of liberating all of Palestine. This is our principle line, but at the same time we cannot be dogmatic in our analysis. We cannot predict the solutions for future problems. We are dialectical, and we take stands in accordance with the circumstances.

Don't you think that there is a big difference between the US military presence in Vietnam and the Israeli presence in Palestine? The US had two choices, either stay or withdraw. But «Israel's» two options are survival or death. Don't you think that these options would prompt «Israel» to use the nuclear weapon?

As I said before it is a difficult task to outline a precise scenario for future events. But there is a possibility that «Israel» might find itself one day faced with a big question: faced with the options of death or life, what kind of life do we want? is it the expansionist presence or the peaceful coexistence presence? Isn't it possible, given the possibility of shifting the balance of forces in the area in the Palestinian people's favor, that a change in the present thinking of the Zionist state might take place? Where it will consider maintaining its «citizens» in a democratic Palestinian state might be the safest method to survive.

These and other questions emphasize the difficulty of giving detailed answers in advance. These questions after all belong to a future era in the Arab—Zionist conflict. And given the present decline in the official Arab policies, one cannot give answers in advance. For this will certainly lead to mistakes and misjudgements.

How can the Palestinian people's inalienable national rights be achieved given the present world formula that seeks to solve the Palestinian problem in a way that might bypass the minimum level of these rights?

I strongly believe that the Soviet Union is committed to the Palestinian people's inalienable rights as the minimum level required for any solution to the Palestinian problem and the Arab—Zionist conflict. The Soviet Union will continue adhering to these rights as long as the Palestinian side maintains its adherence and struggle. During my last visit to the Soviet Union, this commitment was clearly outlined. A senior Soviet official said that the only change in their stand is their willingness to talk with the Israelis. The official added that in these talks the Soviet Union has reaffirmed its well-known positions towards the Middle East crisis and the Palestinian problem, which emphasize the Israeli withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories, self-determination for the Palestinian people and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, through the international peace conference with the participation of all concerned parties, the permanent members of the UN security council and the PLO on equal footings.

During the past 20 years of Struggle, to what extent did the concept of operational bases prove itself scientifically sound?

By no way, should the concept of operational bases be assessed in the light of the present conditions of the Palestinian Revolution outside occupied Palestine. The difficulties and the obstacles facing the Revolution's second base, in Lebanon, should not be taken as evidence to the *fall* of this concept, which is scientifically and practically correct and appropriate for the Palestine question, with the Palestinian people's status of «diaspora» and the nature of the battle mounted against the Zionist-imperialist enemy, kept in mind.

The major part of the Palestinian people are living outside their homeland, and that is why the concept of operational bases was adopted. It was further crystalized and developed by our deeper understanding of the nature of the enemy and of our determination to achieve victory.

The Palestinian Revolution has faced a great deal of dif-

difficulties. This concept might be viewed as a failure, because our experience in Jordan failed to establish a sound and solid base. At present, the Palestinian revolution in Lebanon faces so many difficulties created by several sides. However, there are insistent questions; namely: What tasks should be shouldered by over 1.5 million Palestinians in Jordan and about 500,000 Palestinians living in Lebanon? Would the Palestinian Revolution inside Palestine be able to go on with such a great effectiveness and vigour without the support and the backing of the second base abroad?

The long experience of the contemporary Palestinian struggle made it clear that to keep the dialectical link between the Revolution's forces inside and outside occupied Palestine, it is essential to establish operational bases for the Revolution in the front Arab countries, particularly in Jordan, due to its specific significance and peculiarity. Occasional failures and difficulties should by no means make us give up these facts, which were developed into rules through the experience of the Palestinian struggle.

This is our outlook of the issue. Furthermore, our political and organizational strategy laid down by the second Congress in 1969 called for the creation of an Arab Hanoi. With this frankness, we addressed our masses and our revolution forces. By no way should we adopt empiricism as a law. It is essential to have a workplan and to lay down a strategy. Such a strategy might be modified, re-considered or developed, but there must be one.

The difficulties that confronted the Revolution's second base in Jordan and Lebanon did not urge us to re-consider the concept itself, because it is completely right, rather urged us to find out why did we fail to establish invulnerable operational bases outside Palestine. Our thorough review of this experience allows us to attribute this failure mainly to the failure of the Palestinian Revolution to establish the proper relation with the Jordanian masses and their revolutionary forces before 1970 and to the non-establishment of sound relations with the Lebanese masses and their revolutionary forces between 1971 and 1982.

In Jordan, the Palestinian Revolution disregarded and replaced the Jordanian people and the Jordanian national movement. Misled by the illusion that it can neutralize the regime by raising the slogan of «non interference in its internal affairs», the Revolution did not participate in the Jordanian masses' social-national battles.

In Lebanon, the relationship was confined to containing the National Lebanese Movement. It confiscated their role, revived opponent traditional reactionary forces, and moved behind the scenes to contact their fascist enemies, including the government.

Had the Palestinian Revolution enjoyed clarity of vision and had it known how to establish good relations with the Jordanian and the Lebanese people, had it supported them against their national and class enemies, the situation would have greatly altered.

Prospects of struggle inside the occupied homeland

What are the limits of the Palestinian struggle inside Palestine? What is the exact task of this struggle and what is the actual capability to upgrade this struggle? To what extent have the slogans on this level been translated into concrete accomplishments?

The struggle of our people inside the occupied homeland is strongly linked to the struggle mounted by their fellow people in exile. These ties were marvellously manifested through the uprisings staged by the Palestinian people inside the occupied territories to back and support their revolution abroad in time of need.

Undoubtedly, there are wide prospects for this courageous struggle, as resistance ways are being continuously developed. The recent uprising staged by the Palestinian people in the occupied homeland in protest to the visit of George Shultz, the US secretary of State, provided undeniable evidence to their absolute and non-controversial rejection of the Camp David Accords, and of the Jordanian regime's option. Their uprising, which lasted for months, provided evidence to the fact that collective unified action could crystallise and safeguard against the capitulationist plans masterminded by the US—Zionist alliance, and accepted by the Amman and the Cairo circles.

The collective Palestinian will, demonstrated during Schultz' visit, is a good example to follow in the future. It might work as a first link in the chain of the Palestinian counter-attack against the deterioration and retreat scheme targeting the entire Arab World.

It is high time to accord sufficient attention to the Palestinian Revolution's first base, inside the occupied territories. This is a lesson we learnt from the past experience. In the past, the Revolution leadership did not work effectively to develop national struggle, it has rather involved itself in several problems and concerns facing the Palestinian action abroad.

In occupied Palestine, there are about two million people living under the yoke of occupation and suffering of awful and unbearable conditions. Therefore, it is necessary to exercise all forms of struggle. Once again, the significance of the first base is demonstrated.

At present, we must first work to unite the instrument of the revolution inside Palestine, through the possible coordination forms. Therefore, we should speed up work to translate the resolutions of the unification session of the PNC held in Algiers last April. We express satisfaction over the results attained on this level and call for attaining more similar accomplishments.

It is time to give priority to stepping up our military activities inside occupied Palestine, to escalate all other forms of struggle and to take the months-long uprising as our example for future action.

It is time to accord more attention to the anti-Zionist democratic Israeli forces and to extend support for their struggle against the common enemy.

Struggle inside the occupied territories has more than one strategic and direct task. It should keep the Palestinian question aflame on both the Arab and the international levels, in order to enable friendly forces to step up their solidarity campaigns in support of our cause and intensify their pressure on the enemy to force it to recognize our legitimate national rights, foremost of which the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent state.

It should also push the Israelis to be convinced that there are a Palestinian people having just national rights. As «Israel» managed to introduce psychological changes in our ranks by persuading all that «Israel» is undefeatable, we should at least tell the enemy that the Palestinian people exist, and can not be ignored. Their rights have to be recognized.

We must exert every possible effort to make the burdens of the occupation far heavier than its revenues. Then and only ►

then, we would be marching along to restore our just national rights.

This, of course, is not the task of the struggle inside the occupied territories only. This struggle can not introduce the needed change in the balance of forces, which would force the establishment of a Palestinian state despite the enemy's will, but rather it is the task of the entire Palestinian struggle, fully linked to its national and internationalist dimensions.

How did your viewpoint develop concerning the relationship between the Palestinian national factor and the Arab national factor?

This viewpoint developed during two stages, each divided into subdivisions. The first stage was my participation in the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM). This stage overlooked the Palestinian national factor and emphasized the pan-Arab factor. I would like to point out that the ANM viewed the liberation of Palestine as a process that preconditioned achieving comprehensive Arab unity. And the ANM's slogan «unity is the road to Palestine» summarizes the ANM's thinking. The ANM strongly believed in the pan-Arab dimension in the early fifties, when we attempted to wage military actions against the Zionist enemy, due to the continuous confrontations with the Jordanian army which we used to call in those days the «Guardians of Israel».

Several factors played a role in emphasizing the pan-Arab national factor first, the results of the 1948 war and the defeat of the Arab armies in Palestine led us to believe in the pan-Arab response against this enemy. Second, at that time the idea of pan-Arab was in its peak. Third, the atmosphere that the late comrade Wadi Haddad and I found ourselves in, in the American University of Beirut (AUB), where several Arab militants showed readiness to struggle for Palestine, this atmosphere overshadowed the Palestinian national factor. It is worth pointing out that pan-Arab was an ideology opposing imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction. Added to that is the ANM's inability to contact the Palestinian masses living in the 1948 occupied territories and to organize them. The exception to this was the Gaza strip, where the Palestinian chapter of the ANM was a strong force.

The Nasserite era added to our belief that the pan-Arab idea was close to liberating Palestine. But the events that took place later shocked us and forced us gradually to question the old pan-Arab ideas. The first event was the Zionists' plan to transfer the Jordan rivers' water course and president Nasser's failure to respond. The second event was the dissolving of the unity between Egypt and Syria (1963). And the third event was the triumph of the Algerian revolution (1962). These events forced us to seriously reconsider the relationship between the Palestinian national factor and the Arab national factor.

Consequently a Palestinian branch of the ANM was formed, called «The Youth of Revenge». This branch was concerned with the Palestinian struggle. And it was considered a step on the correct path, despite the continued emphasis on the Arab national dimension.

The second stage is the PFLP's. And in my own view point, this stage materialized the correct and precise outlining of the relationship between the Palestinian national and the Arab national dimensions.

The PFLP realized that the Palestinian national dimension in the struggle should be emphasized more than the pan-Arab dimension. The 2nd and 4th PFLP congresses' political reports

outlined precisely the dialectical relationship between the Palestinian national and the Arab national dimensions.

What is your response to the charge that the PFLP still emphasizes the pan-Arab dimension over the Palestinian dimension?

I can easily countercharge those people that they emphasize the narrow national dimension without taking any consideration to the nature of our enemy and the methods to confront it. But this essential issue should not be dealt with charges and countercharges. A correct definition of the relationship between these two dimensions should be outlined. Our success in confronting the imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary camp requires mobilizing the broadest alliances between the Palestinian revolution and the nationalist progressive Arab forces and regimes. Emphasizing a narrow Palestinian nationalist dimension could only harm the struggle.

During the past 20 years what were the developments that took place in your viewpoints concerning the structure of the Zionist entity and the factors affecting it, its relations to the west, the confrontation with this entity on the Palestinian and Arab levels in the light of the world situation and the conflict between Socialism and Imperialism and the Israeli democratic forces?

The questions raised have great importance, particularly when understanding the nature of the Zionist entity constitutes an important fact in outlining the forms of struggle against it.

The essential issue that should be discussed in my opinion is the nature and the level of development that the Zionist state has witnessed and the effects of this development on us, rather than discussing the developments that took place in our viewpoints. The Zionist state has witnessed several big qualitative changes on all levels for the past 40 years.

On the economic level, industry is ranked first among the different production sectors, in terms of the industry's share in the GNP or the exports. In 1984, 90% of the Zionist state's exports, which reached 6.5 billion dollars, were manufactured goods. Industry in the Zionist state has become the dominant factor in economy. The major weight in the Israeli industry now is directed towards the «technotron» stage where electronics become the cornerstone of the industrial technology.

On the military level, Israel now produces the MIRKAVA tanks and the KFIR fighter plane and is developing the industry of missiles, including the Jericho-II missile which is capable of carrying nuclear warheads. And it is well-known that «Israel» exports arms to several African, Latin American countries and even to the US army. Although the production of the LAVI-fighter plane has been delayed, developing the plane is still continuing.

Despite these economic and military developments, the main issue of concern are the developments that took place, and could take place, in the organic relationship between the Zionist state and the Zionist movement, and on the relationship between the Zionist state and the Zionist movement on one hand and imperialism on the other hand. When «Israel» was established in 1948, some said that this state could live nor-

mally among the region's countries, and its connection to Zionism is not inevitable, neither the role it was supposed to play for imperialism. And consequently major forces in the Arab communist movement and progressive world public opinion outlined their stands concerning «Israel» on that basis.

In contrast to this viewpoint which prevailed after WW II and as a result of the holocaust, another viewpoint considered «Israel» a crystalization of the Zionist project and a materialization of the organic bonds and joint interests of imperialism and Zionism in this region. «Israel» has become an indivisible part of imperialism's world policies. In addition to its role in this region, «Israel» is playing an important role in supporting fascist and racist regimes in Latin America, Central America and Africa. And «Israel» today is a partner in the US' SDI program which is a threat to all humanity. In addition to its well-known participation in the anti-USSR campaign.

It becomes natural thus to conclude that after 40 years, the organic bond between «Israel» and world Zionism and between «Israel» and world Zionism on one hand and imperialism on the other hand is a reality. This bond aims at increasing the role of «Israel» as a partner in executing aggressive plans and profiting from these plans. This fact is materialized by the «Strategic Alliance» agreement between «Israel» and the US. This alliance only reconfirms the organic bond between «Israel», Zionism and world imperialism.

The logic which views the Arabs' stand in rejecting the existence of «Israel» has pushed matters that far, is totally incorrect. This could be seen in «Israel's» continuous aggression and expansion despite the fact that the Jordanian army was mainly concerned with protecting «Israel's» borders, the Jordanian regime's and other Arab regime's acceptance of the UN resolution 242, and the willingness of most Arab states to recognize «Israel» and to negotiate with it. This is the reality of «Israel» and the reality of Zionism. The PFLP deals with realities, and based on these realities takes its stands. The aggressive expansionist nature of the Zionist state and the role it plays in imperialism's world policies will undoubtedly help dig its own grave.

Relations with Israeli democratic forces

It should be clear to all that any evaluation of the Israeli democratic forces should be connected directly and dialectically to the nature of the Israeli society and to the background of «Israel's» establishment from economic, political and historical perspectives. Added to that is these forces' viewpoint on how to solve the «Jewish problem», given the nature of the Zionist state, the scopes of its development and its internal contradictions.

First I would like to point out that the strategic slogan raised by the PFLP since its establishment was «establishing the people's democratic Palestinian state», where total equality prevails, notwithstanding sex, religion and race. It is natural thus, that the Palestinian and Arab struggle should interconnect with the struggle of the democratic and progressive forces in «Israel» which raise slogans that conform with the Palestinian revolution's slogans and have anti-Zionist stands ideologically and practically. And we have worked for a long period emphasizing this point in the PNC's resolutions,

particularly in the 13 th, 14 th, 15 th, 16 th sessions and was reconfirmed in last April's session of the PNC. We realize that there should be a distinction between the Israeli democratic and progressive forces and the Zionist forces. Neglecting these

differences only harms the Palestinian revolution. It confuses the Palestinian masses and provides a Palestinian cover for Arab—Zionist contacts, in addition to weakening the stands of the Palestinian revolution's Arab and international alliances and the role of the Israeli democratic and progressive forces themselves.

The PFLP does not underestimate the importance of taking advantage of the internal contradictions in the Zionist state, but we should not overestimate the weight and influence of these contradictions in the present period. Although some Zionist circles have begun calling for an Israeli withdrawal from parts of the occupied territories, as a result of the growing political, military and demographical role of the Palestinian factor and the fear for the security of the Zionist state, these circles are not influential in the decision-making and still adhere to the Zionist ideology which is based on expansionism and negating the existence of the Palestinian people.

Some people say that this period of the Palestinian struggle is dedicated to gaining the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, and that all stands which serve reaching this goal should be taken advantage of. But this viewpoint overlooks what I have mentioned about the organic bonds between «Israel», Zionism and world imperialism, which necessitates a dialectical interconnection in waging the battle on all levels and fields. We are fighting against «Israel» and Zionism at the same time. Our fight to maintain the UN resolution 3379, which views Zionism as racism, is a tactical battle closely linked to accumulating victories to reach the strategic goal.

Based on this, the PFLP registered its reservation on the resolution adopted in the April unification session of the PNC, which called for establishing contacts with democratic Israeli forces without specifying an anti-Zionist nature and stands of these forces. The PFLP considers this resolution a gap from which some reactionary Palestinian forces could take advantage of to contact influential Zionist forces. And this was manifested clearly in the Amirav-Nusseibeh meeting (Amirav is a member of the Herut party and Nusseibeh is a Palestinian professor).

My aim from this review is to outline the dangers behind legitimizing and demanding contacts with Zionist forces, particularly in this period of declining official Arab policies, manifested clearly in the resolutions of the Amman Arab summit.

When dealing with this issue, two facts should be taken in mind. The first one is that the situation of the parties in «Israel» is vacillating and unstable and this situation is expressed in the splits and mergers that occurred and which plague the democratic forces as well. The second fact is the growth of the rightist and fascist trend in the Israeli society in contrast to the limited size and effects of the Israeli democratic forces. And this could be clearly seen in the results of the Knesset elections and polls. In the 11 th Knesset elections, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality gained only 5,800 Jewish votes, whereas Kahana gained 20,000 Jewish votes, which clearly indicates the forementioned fact. Despite that, this doesn't mean that the Zionist state has no internal contradictions or that the laws of class struggle do not apply to it. But this requires the Palestinian revolution to outline at every stage, the methods of dealing with this issue and to take advantage of these contradictions in a way that serves the just Palestinian struggle to achieve the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state.

The Palestinian Working Strategy and the PFLP's Role

In September 1986, an opinion poll was conducted in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip by the Palestinian daily *Al Fajr*, the US daily *Newsday* and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. This poll was taken after nearly twenty years of consistent Zionist attempts to eliminate the Palestinian national identity and the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, or at least to create reactionary substitute leaderships. Nonetheless, this poll showed that 93.5% of the Palestinians believe that the PLO is their sole, legitimate representative. Moreover, 77.9% preferred the establishment of a democratic Palestinian state in all of Palestine as the permanent solution to the Palestinian problem.

Since the start of the Palestinian revolution, the occupied land has been a top priority. It has been the subject of a significant portion of the debate in the Palestinian arena throughout the past two decades. The PFLP, from the time of its inception, has had a distinctive viewpoint on this issue. The PFLP's view originated from its understanding of the relationship between the struggle inside and outside occupied Palestine, and between the Palestinian and Arab national dimension of the struggle. The Front's view is also based on its understanding of the need for supportive operational bases for the revolution, and the issue of stages in the Palestinian struggle. The following article examines how this viewpoint was outlined, practiced and developed.

THE GOAL: LIBERATING THE HOMELAND

From the moment that the land of Palestine was occupied, the main goal of the Palestinian struggle was clearly identified as liberating all of Palestine. This goal was clearly stated in the Palestinian National Charter which was adopted by the first session of the PNC, held in Jerusalem in May 1964. Ever since, liberating Palestine has been the main obsession of every patriotic Palestinian. This goal became the basis for the many forms of resistance that spread in the refugee camps and among the Palestinians living under occupation. It became even clearer in the course of the conflict between the Palestinian masses and the Zionist enemy. Realizing the nature of the conflict, the Zionists expend the full strength of their military machine in an open war against the Palestinian revolution outside occupied Palestine, aiming to eliminate its operational bases.

The 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in addition to Egypt's Sinai and Syria's Golan Heights, gave the conflict new dimensions and forms. The occupation troops, with their military might and technological superiority, faced the masses in the newly occupied territories. On one hand, the Israelis viewed these territories as a new market that would eventually import nearly 90% of its needs from 'Israel', while providing a cheap labor force. On the other hand, they found themselves at war with the masses of the occupied territories, who have refused to relinquish their national identity and

declared goal, thus linking up with the struggle of the Palestinian masses elsewhere. An overview of Zionist policy is in order here to show the environment in which the Palestinian resistance operates in occupied Palestine.

ZIONIST OCCUPATION POLICY

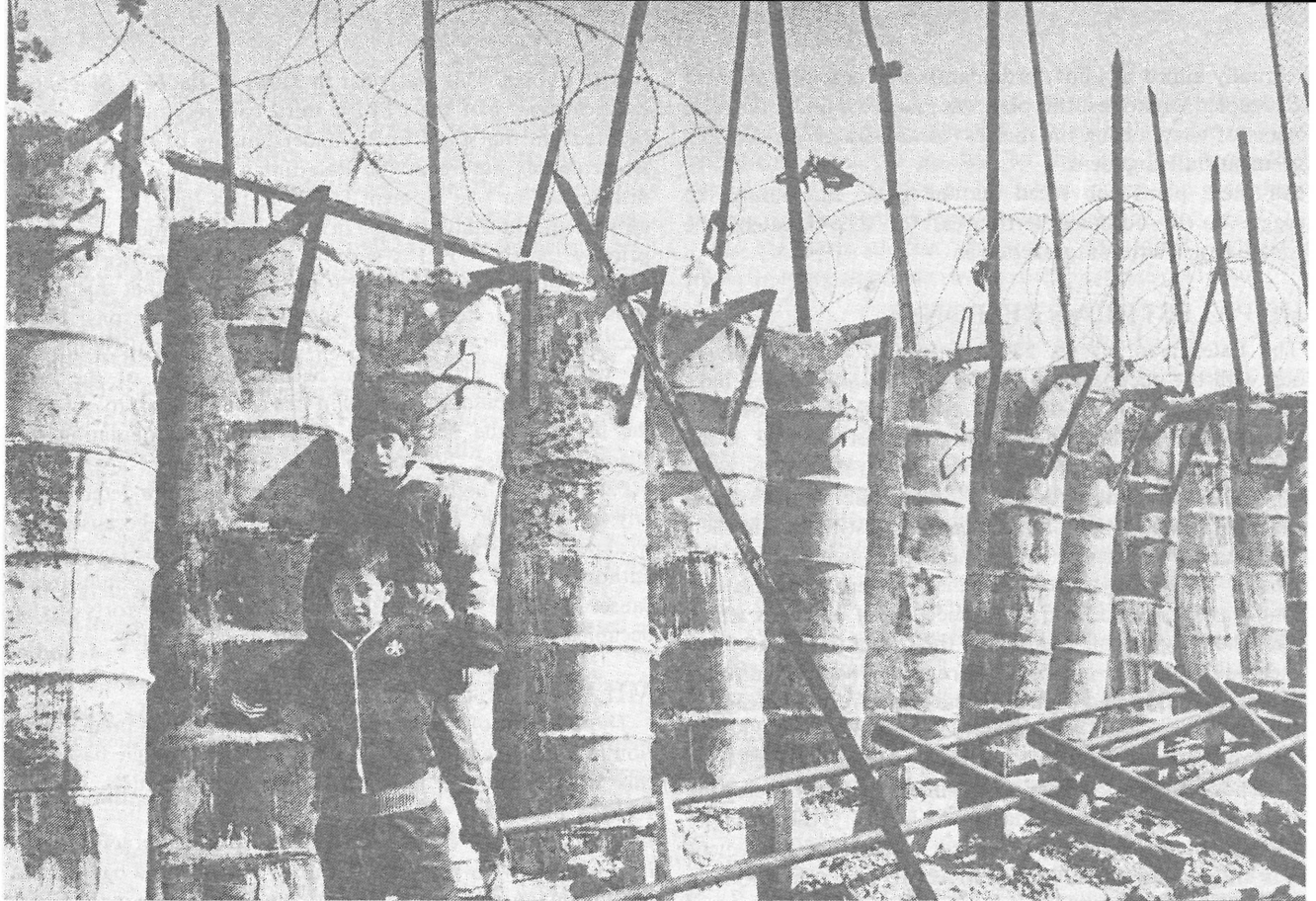
Realizing that the balance of forces was to their favor, the Zionists pursued a policy of creating facts, exploiting the Palestinian masses and land, while forcibly curbing their struggle. This policy assumed a variety of forms.; A few months after the 1967 war, the Israeli occupation authorities raised the slogan of «open bridges». This was engineered by the then war minister, Moshe Dayan, due to his awareness that the future would bring more confrontation. By opening the two bridges, Damia and Allenby, that connect the West Bank to Jordan, the Zionists sought to find a way of releasing some of the pressure on the Palestinians, to avoid the situation reaching a breaking point.

In their thrust to create facts, the occupation authorities embarked on a broad campaign of establishing settlements. To this end, they employed all means of repression, as well as the laws of the British Mandate and Ottoman rule, to confiscate Palestinian land. Settlements were built so as to surround Palestinian towns, cutting them off from each other.

Meanwhile, the occupation authorities waged vicious campaigns against Palestinian nationalists and political forces. Nearly 300,000 Palestinians have been jailed since the 1967 occupation. Added to this was the deportation of activists, to empty the occupied territories of effective elements. Palestinians were also expelled indirectly on a regular basis by virtue of economic restraints. Moreover, the Zionists sought to distort the Palestinian people's character by banning or destroying elements of their national heritage and culture, while stealing other elements and labeling these as Israeli.

The occupation authorities focused their efforts on impeding the natural development of the Palestinian economy. Industrial development was hindered and subjected to Israeli economic interests. Generally, industry in the 1967 occupied territories has been restricted to producing light consumer goods, leaving the economic base weak and making the Palestinian consumer dependent on Israeli production. Meanwhile, the Israelis opened their own economic institutions to Palestinian manual laborers. Nearly 120,000 Palestinians have worked in Israeli enterprises, in the worst conditions and at substandard wages, not to mention the racist atmosphere.

As a result of Zionist land confiscation, the Palestinian agricultural sector has deteriorated drastically. Out of nearly 70,000 peasants working in this field in 1967, there are now less than 38,000. The occupation authorities have enacted other measures to force the Palestinian peasant off his land. He was forbidden to expand his cultivation, to drill for water or to grow the crops of his choice. If he was forced to stop farming



Kalandia camp, West Bank, walled in to prevent stonethrowing

by these measures, the occupation authorities confiscated his land on the pretext that it had become fallow.

Public services provided to Palestinians are curtailed by the Zionist authorities' racist discrimination. The Palestinian masses of the 1948 occupied territories face this racism in their daily life. The financial crisis of the local Arab municipalities, and the discrimination against Palestinian students and employees, attest to this situation. In the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, services are only provided for the purpose of eliminating the militant spirit of the Palestinian masses. The services provided by the 'civil' administration and some collaborators are geared to making the Palestinian population consumption - oriented.

The Zionists employ the iron fist policy for confronting the ever-growing mass uprising, following the failure of other means to subdue the population. The iron fist policy is a true manifestation of the character of the conflict. It means outright murder, detention, deportation, confiscation, collective punishment, etc.

On the political level, several projects have been introduced with the sole purpose of eliminating the Palestinian cause. The most prominent of these plans are:

1. The Allon plan (1970), which was also called the regional solution, calls for Israeli withdrawal from parts of the West Bank, to be turned over to Jordan, while most of the territory would remain under Israeli occupation.

2. King Hussein's United Kingdom plan (1972) complements the goals of the Allon plan by calling for the West Bank's merger with Jordan, and sidestepping the PLO.

3. In the mid-seventies, the occupation authorities organized a general election for the West Bank municipalities, hoping to create a gateway for controlling them. Contrary to Zionist expectations, the elections resulted in the ascendance of Palesti-

nian nationalist mayors. This led to direct confrontation with the occupation forces, climaxed by the terrorist attempts on the lives of the elected mayors of Nablus, Ramallah and Al Bireh. Following the failure to assassinate the mayors, the Israeli occupation authorities fired them and installed Israeli military officers. Later some Palestinian collaborators were appointed as mayors by the Israeli authorities, with the approval of the Jordanian regime.

4. Parallel to the confrontation with the elected mayors, the Israeli authorities attempted to impose the 'autonomy' plan and 'civil' administration, whereby the occupation of the land continues, the inhabitants are granted self-rule in daily affairs, while security remains in Israeli hands. The 'autonomy' plan failed, but it was accompanied by the attempt to impose the village leagues, groups of collaborators created by the occupation authorities, aimed at dividing the masses and their support to the PLO. Though the village leagues were granted certain privileges like permission to carry arms and to help people in getting construction licenses, electricity, etc., the Palestinian masses rejected them altogether and the Israelis had to give up trying to impose them as an alternative leadership.

5. The most recent plan was created under the pretext of improving the Palestinians' living conditions. The occupation authorities' new approach was based on the need to develop a social strata on which they could rely in implementing their liquidationist plans. Therefore, in a joint US-Israeli-Jordanian effort, funds were allocated and some service projects begun, to develop a Palestinian strata to serve as a Trojan horse in the future. The slogan of improving living conditions corresponded with the plan for a division of functions between the Jordanian regime and the Israeli occupation authorities. ►

Eventually aimed at joint Jordanian-Israeli administration of the occupied territories, this plan was marketed under the false slogans of «supporting the masses' steadfastness», «stopping settlement-building», etc.

All these plans converged on one goal: eliminating the struggle in the occupied territories, for this threatens the ultimate Israeli aims of total control.

THE PALESTINIAN RESPONSE

The Palestinian masses have confronted all these plans, along with the occupation itself. The modes of struggle have varied. Any study of the forms of struggle should be based on the Palestinian revolution's understanding of the role of the occupied territories as a struggle arena. Regardless of the position of the Palestinian resistance organizations, the masses have been aware of the plans directed against them and their cause. Based on their own experience, they have realized that the battle was a question of existence. From this realization sprang their resistance and clear rejection of all plans which neglect their inalienable rights, i.e., their right to liberate their homeland using all means of struggle - social, cultural, economic, political and armed. In the course of their struggle, tens of thousands have been martyred. Hundreds of thousands of families have become refugees. Homes have been demolished and thousands imprisoned. All this only fueled the Palestinian people's determination to intensify the struggle. The Palestinian people have created a resistance movement that is unique, not only in the Arab world, but internationally as well.

In the course of the Palestinian national struggle, the prevailing objective conditions have served to reinforce the centrality of the struggle in occupied Palestine within the overall liberation struggle. The resistance movement outside Palestine has been subject to constant attack - in Jordan in 1970-71, and later in Lebanon, before and during 1982, and then the camp wars. The difficulties these attacks have presented for the Palestinian armed struggle, added to the decline of the official Arab policies and the Arab liberation movement - which led to Camp David for instance - plus the class nature of the Palestinian leadership, have all laid a heavy burden on the Palestinian masses under occupation.

Facing these difficult facts, the Palestinian masses have not yielded. Rather they have shouldered their responsibility and made life unbearable for the occupiers. Complementing the growth of the Palestinian popular resistance movement, the role of the PLO has grown to the point of becoming the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people everywhere.

THE PFLP'S ROLE

Since its inception, the PFLP's political strategy has posited the goal of the Palestinian national liberation movement as «the establishment of a democratic national state in Palestine where Arabs and Jews live as citizens with equal rights and duties. This state would constitute an inseparable part of a progressive democratic Arab order, living in peace with all progressive forces of the world.» Based on this, the PFLP defined its political, organizational, military and ideological strategy. The enemy camp and its nature was defined, as were the camp of friends, and the suitable forms of struggle for liberating the homeland and establishing an independent state.

The occupied land was a central part of the PFLP's programs. The armed struggle practiced by the Front, and the alliances it seeks, are aimed solely to achieve the Palestinian

people's goals. This was clear in *Tasks of the New Stage*, the political report of the PFLP's third congress in 1972, which pointed out that the PFLP's understanding of the prolonged and complex nature of the Palestinian struggle «should not distract us for one moment from the fact that the resistance movement, the daily struggle in occupied Palestine... is our top priority...» The PFLP's specific programs for work in occupied Palestine were based on the conviction that this arena should continue to be a hot spot for several reasons: First, because it is the arena where our masses are confronting the occupation on a daily basis. Second, because of the high Palestinian population density in this arena. Third, to obstruct the plans of the occupation authorities for liquidating the Palestinian cause. Fourth, to keep the resistance against the occupation at a high level, which would serve as a deterrent to any deviationist Palestinian trend. Finally, because any weakness in this arena would pave the way for the occupation authorities and Arab reaction to liquidate the Palestinian cause. From the start, the PFLP concentrated its efforts on the occupied land, acting as a militant vanguard example.

MILITARY STRUGGLE

The PFLP took the particularities of the Palestinian situation into consideration and practiced armed struggle based on this understanding. The most prominent features of the PFLP's pioneering military actions in the years immediately following the 1967 occupation were: (1) properly practicing the laws of guerrilla warfare; (2) creating underground bases, taking advantage of the high population concentration in the Gaza Strip and Hebron area; (3) broadening the field of operations, whereby attacks were carried out in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and the 1948 occupied territories; (4) establishing close contact with the masses; (5) directing the military struggle mainly against the Zionist enemy on a daily basis; (6) eliminating collaborators; and (7) spreading political awareness among the fighters, to create fighters with clear political goals.

Concentrating on the military aspect of the struggle in the first half of the seventies had some negative side effects. The Front did not expend much effort on creating popular frameworks. Nor did it give adequate time to establishing its party organizations that would guarantee the growth of the

Facing the occupation troops is part of the people's daily life



work. These shortcomings occurred in the context of harsh objective conditions experienced by the revolution after the September 1970 massacres in Jordan. The outcome of the conflict with the Jordanian regime was that the longest border with occupied Palestine was closed to the Palestinian fighters, while quiet prevailed on other fronts. This left the resistance in occupied Palestine alone in its confrontation of the occupation forces.

Since that time, the PFLP has worked to consolidate its political and mass work in the occupied Palestine, to fill the gaps noted above. At the same time, the armed struggle remains a daily concern for the PFLP based on conviction that it is the highest form of struggle against the Zionist enemy. Developing the armed struggle against the Zionists' fascist violence has been accompanied by broadening it as a popular trend. Stonethrowing, using knives and the now extensive use of molotov cocktails have become common features of the Palestinian masses' war against the occupation.

The importance of the armed struggle has been discussed in all of the Front's congresses. In *Tasks of the New Stage*, the PFLP outlined some negative aspects of the revolution's work prior to 1972:

1. The resistance movement in general relied on purely military action, sending commando groups from the outside, without consideration for working among the masses in occupied Palestine, to create secret cells and bases capable of continuing the organized-armed struggle.
2. This way of working neglected the political aspect of the struggle whereby the masses could be organized to create a revolutionary climate that would obstruct the enemy's plans.
3. The resistance's political absence in the occupied land resulted in the existence of three forms of political activities: (a) spontaneous nationalist activities; (b) actions led by reactionary and traditional forces; and (c) collaborators' activities.
4. The Israeli occupation authorities exploited the situation; they based their program on pushing the resistance gradually eastwards (1967-70), as a prelude to liquidating it after isolating it from the masses. They succeeded in this in the West Bank, but failed in the Gaza Strip.
5. Meanwhile, the occupation authorities focused on creating

Among those released in the 1985 prisoner exchange were many of the cadres who pioneered the armed resistance after the 1967 occupation.



daily living problems so that the masses would be absorbed in solving these. Again, the aim was to isolate the resistance movement from the masses, so that the former could be crushed by the military and security forces; this was the rationale for the open bridges, employing Arab labor, etc.

On the basis of this assessment, the Front outlined its understanding and programs to confront these problems.

A DISTINGUISHED POLITICAL LINE

From the beginning, the PFLP was distinguished by its mature, farsighted political thinking. It confronted every attempt to weaken the masses' steadfastness or to obscure the main battle. The Front's main slogan has always been to unite all efforts against the occupation. It was on the forefront in rejecting all plans that aimed, directly or indirectly, at liquidating the Palestinian cause. In the recent period, the Front was the first organization to expose the danger of the plan for joint Israeli-Jordanian administration and the Jordanian regime's policy of normalizing relations with 'Israel' prior to signing any agreement. The Front has also exposed and confronted the Jordanian regime's plan for «improving the quality of life» of the people in the occupied territories.

The unity of the people, the land and the cause has been basic in the Front's positions. Any weakness in this dialectical unity dilutes the essence of the Palestinian cause. Despite the particularities of the Palestinian people living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, 1948 occupied territories or abroad, the PFLP views the people and their struggle as one. Any call for distinguishing between these communities would serve the enemy's plans. Likewise, attempts to repartition the Palestinian homeland serve the interests of the occupation.

This understanding does not contradict with the PFLP's understanding of the policy of stages and interim goals in the Palestinian struggle. As stated in the PFLP's 4th congress political report, the Palestinians' goals will not necessarily be achieved all at once. However, the policy of pursuing interim goals should not replace the strategy of the struggle. Establishing an independent Palestinian state in any liberated part of Palestine would be a great advance in the context of a comprehensive strategy for liberating all of Palestine.

The PFLP realizes the importance of unifying all nationalist efforts to confront the occupation and defeat all conspiracies. Accordingly, the PFLP was among the pioneering forces in the establishment of the Palestinian National Front in 1973. The PFLP exerted great efforts to help the National Front become the arm of the PLO in the occupied homeland, based on conviction that confronting the occupation is the job of all the resistance organizations and the masses, and that division among the Palestinian forces would only be to the occupation's advantage. The Zionist enemy is united in its strategy against the Palestinian people, so no Palestinian party should stand in the way of uniting all against the occupation, for such disunity would weaken the resistance.

The biggest weakness in the Palestinian arena is the political differences that exist in the leadership of the resistance movement. Although these differences have objective, class roots, they should not be allowed to divide the base of the revolution and cripple the struggle, as happened in the division after 1982. The differences should never obscure the objective conditions, especially in the occupied land where the enemy is clearly identified, so there is no reason for not unifying to confront it. With their spontaneous nationalist instinct, the Palestinian masses have always overcome these differences and united in

the field. This was seen in the camp war when all Palestinians united, despite political differences, to protect the armed presence in Lebanon. Over the years, the Palestinian masses' unity in occupied Palestine has been a living testimony to this fact.

In the PFLP's view, the failure of the Palestinian National Front was due to the hegemonic policy of the Palestinian right-wing leadership, despite its having approved this front in theory. Faced with the demise of the National Front, the PFLP has exerted all efforts to rebuild it. Unfortunately, these efforts have yet to materialize. However, the reunification of the PLO in April paves the way for a genuine, new drive to this end.

TWO BASES FOR THE REVOLUTION

The PFLP's view that there are two bases of the revolution relies on the dialectical relationship between the struggle inside and outside occupied Palestine, as well as the relationship between the Palestinian and Arab nationalist struggle. Scientific analysis of the nature of the Zionist enemy and the direct threat it poses to the Arab masses and their progressive and nationalist forces, reveals that objectively the Arab masses are an organic part of the ongoing conflict. Confronting the Zionist entity becomes a direct task for the Arab masses and progressive and nationalist forces. In the absence of this pan-Arab dimension, the Palestinian revolution loses its strategic depth - in geographic, demographic and economic terms. The PFLP posits the central and strategic need for a supportive operational base (outside occupied Palestine). Without a high level of material and moral support from the Palestinian masses in exile and the Arab national liberation movement, the struggle in occupied Palestine will be incapable of enforcing the needed change in the balance of forces. The PFLP's view is not merely a political slogan. Rather it issues from an analysis of the class aspect of the Arab-Zionist conflict and an understanding of the tools required to achieve the Palestinian and Arab masses' goals. Changing the present level of struggle, where no Palestinian land has been liberated, into a level allowing for liberation, is closely connected to great changes in the structure of the Palestinian and Arab liberation movement. It requires that the leadership pass from the bourgeoisie to the working class. This change would ultimately affect the nature of the confrontation, and facilitate the objective and subjective conditions needed for victory.

This conception also takes into account the class, social, economic and ideological nature of the Zionist enemy and its position on the international level. The PFLP has long confronted the viewpoint that neglected analysis of the nature of the Zionist enemy, and justified contacts with Zionist forces on the pretext of infiltrating the enemy's internal front. In contrast, the PFLP outlined its position for dealing with democratic Israeli forces, and clarified the extent of their influence in the Israeli political arena, without harboring illusions or wagering on internal change in 'Israel'. A clear, scientific analysis of the Zionist movement, its role in the capitalist system and its relations to the state of 'Israel', has governed the PFLP's strategy and tactics. Any defect in realizing these objective facts would doubtless lead to political deviation.

MASS WORK

The PFLP policies for mass and union work stem from its strategic view of the masses as the main force in the process of change. The Front's documents clearly show that a revolutionary party cannot play its historical role without relying on

the masses' strength and support. As a political line, this has never been evaded by the Front. However, there was relative delay in establishing mass organizations and participating in unions in occupied Palestine, due to several factors. One, the PFLP's general tendency was for military action with little consideration given to mass work. Two, the Front was inexperienced in this field due to its youth and inadequately scientific understanding of mass work; it had only recently emerged from the Arab Nationalist Movement which operated chiefly on the regional plane and had a totally different understanding of mass work.

The PFLP, however, succeeded in overcoming this lack due to its distinguished militant heritage and the mass support to its policies. In addition, the Front's orientation towards Palestinian national unity led it to participate in the already established mass frameworks rather than creating its own. Still, the unifying approach was always confronted with a factional trend that viewed the Front's unity policy as a weakness and attempted to exploit this to its own advantage. This led the PFLP to establish mass organizations supportive of its political line, without neglecting the goal of unifying all mass organizations to achieve a unity that would prevail in leading the struggle. Unification of all unions and mass organizations remains a slogan of the PFLP's work in the occupied land.

The same policy is applied to unions. The PFLP has thus far proven to be the most committed to the unity of the General Trade Union Confederation in the West Bank, condemning all attempts to divide the ranks of the Palestinian working class, for this would be detrimental to this class and to the overall mass struggle. The Front has always worked towards preventing any division, but the Confederation has in fact been twice divided in recent years. The PFLP, along with other Palestinian resistance organizations in the PLO, is currently engaged in efforts to rectify this situation.

Alongside consistent work for unified mass organizations and unions, the PFLP has always worked to upgrade the masses' political and militant level, and has succeeded in this field. The mass organizations supportive of the PFLP's line have always been in the forefront of the struggle; they are characterized by a high level of militancy. In other fields of mass work, various forms of mobilization have been employed, based on an understanding of the circumstances of the various sectors of the masses. The Front has amassed a rich experience in the fields of working with students, women, workers, etc. There is also mass work carried out via sports clubs, medical emergency committees, committees for defending the land and the camps, and cultural groups for safeguarding Palestinian heritage.

PFLP: TARGET OF ZIONIST AGGRESSION

The PFLP, with what it represents in political, military and ideological terms, has been targeted by the enemy which views its line as a threat. Many efforts have been exerted by the occupation authorities to try and eliminate the Front's organization in Palestine. This was very obvious during 1985 and 1986 when PFLP cadres were numerous among the hundreds of militants and activists who were arrested in occupied Palestine, and the scores who were deported.

The attacks against the Front attest to its status in the struggle in the occupied land. Despite the ferocity of the attacks, it was proven that the PFLP has accumulated an experience that helped it in resisting siege and going on to consolidate its organizational structure and its support among the masses. ●

Military Operations

SEPTEMBER

In September, there were 51 military operations, covering all parts of occupied Palestine. There were nine anti-occupation attacks in Jerusalem, twenty in the West Bank, eight in the Gaza Strip and fourteen in the part of Palestine occupied in 1948. The Zionist enemy claimed that their losses in Jerusalem were only one injured, with 31 vehicles and a bus station destroyed. The enemy admitted to three injured and two burned vehicles in the West Bank, and one injured and three vehicles destroyed in the Gaza Strip. In the 1948 occupied area, the Zionists admitted three killed, nine injured and fires in four factories, causing \$8 million in damages, in addition to the partial destruction of the Israeli intelligence building in Naharia, and six vehicles burned.

Of the 51 operations, there were twenty using molotov cocktails, eleven explosions, four using hand grenades, five burnings of Israeli vehicles and institutions, and five stabbings. In addition, there were two attempts to liquidate collaborators, causing the injury of one of them. In two cases, Israeli soldiers were kidnapped, and one of them was killed. In another incident, a Palestinian tried to strip a Zionist soldier of his weapon, but the Israeli patrol opened fire and killed him. Another Palestinian rammed his car into the car of the military governor of the occupied West Bank, injuring him.

Compared to past months, the number of military operations in September was the highest. There were 43 anti-occupation attacks in January, 37 in February, 16 in March, 33 in April, 44 in May, 38 in June, 38 in July and 39 in August. Molotov cocktails continued to be the weapon most frequently employed by the Palestinians confronting occupation. The Israeli authorities have pointed out that there has emerged «a new form of operations, executed by children between the ages of eight and ten years old, who

have great ability to prepare and utilize molotov cocktails precisely and courageously» (quoted in *Al Watan*, September 2nd).

The number of military operations in the part of Palestine occupied in 1948 continues to rise. The most prominent operation there in September was in Naharia. Palestinian freedom fighters penetrated numerous barriers to plant explosives in the Israeli intelligence center. The resulting explosion injured four Israeli agents, burned six vehicles and destroyed part of the building.

OCTOBER

The great, overall uprising of the masses in October makes it difficult to single out specific military operations. In addition, the occupation authorities frequently imposed a news blackout on the escalating events. Yet despite the Israeli army's state of alert and intensive security measures for confronting

the uprising and armed struggle, the Palestinian masses expressed their anti-occupation feelings with whatever means were available.

The number of military operations carried out in October totalled thirty. According to the Zionists' acknowledgements, four Israeli soldiers and settlers were killed, and nine were injured, in addition to the destruction of several vehicles, buildings and bus stations. Palestinian freedom fighters were in action in all parts of the occupied land of Palestine - in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the 1948 occupied territories.

The most prominent operation was on October 6th in the center of Gaza city. A Palestinian commando group clashed with Israeli forces in what the Associated Press called a «bloody shoot-out.» Four Palestinian fighters were martyred and an Israeli secret service (Shin Bet) officer was killed. Two of the Palestinian martyrs were among the six Palestinians who escaped

Computerized Iron Fist

Israeli military rule over the Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank has taken a new, hightech turn with the installation of secret computer. According to the annual report of the West Bank Data Base Project, an independent Israeli research institute, the Israeli military began operating this computer in August, to gather information and control the activities of Palestinians in the West Bank. In addition to business and personal data, West Bankers' political attitudes are being recorded. The computer is programmed by the Defense Ministry to ensure secrecy.

Meron Benvenisti, author of the report, describes the computer as «the ultimate instrument of population control, a computerized carrot and stick operation... By pressing a key...any civil administration official will gain access to lists of 'positives' and 'hostiles' and decide on the fate of their applications, from car licensing to water quotas, import permits and travel documents.»

Israeli military sources say the data collection program is designed to help Palestinians and improve services provided to them! In reality, the computer stands as new evidence that the plan for «improving the quality of life» for residents of the 1967 occupied territories, is just a facade to cover the imposition of more sophisticated forms of control. Like the 'civil' administration which preceded it and the ongoing Israeli-Jordanian collaboration for joint administration of the territories, the plan aims to ensure Israeli control of Palestinian land, water resources and manpower. To this end, the occupation authorities are not easing repression as Peres has glibly promised. Rather, as the computer shows, the Zionists' iron fist is becoming tighter and more pervasive. On the other hand, the installation of the computer reveals that after decades of occupation, the Zionist authorities are still ill at ease, for they have yet to squash the Palestinian people's resistance which is growing day by day.

from a Gaza prison on May 19th. After one of them was recaptured by the Israeli army, the other five militants succeeded in making the Israeli secret service believe that they were in Tunisia, by having their arrival broadcast from there.

One-third of the military operations in October were carried out using

molotov cocktails. This attests to the increasing mass-based character of the Palestinian resistance against the occupation. It indicates that a comprehensive popular war has become a possibility if the necessary material and moral support is provided to the people living under occupation. ●

for being caught off guard. Prime Minister Shamir convened the cabinet and blamed Syria for allowing such an attack to be launched. The Zionist leadership is clearly loath to admit that despite all their expenditures on high-tech security, the Palestinian revolution retains the innovative ability and courage needed to continue the struggle to regain their homeland.

An incident about one week after the operation confirmed the extent of the panic it had created among the Zionists. An Israeli soldier near Metulla settlement, in the Upper Galilee, sighted a strange flying object. Thinking it was another hang glider, he immediately notified the military leadership of the area, who declared a state of high alert. Settlers in the area rushed to shelters, while the Israeli army conducted a search, with helicopters firing flares and straffing with heavy machine guns, along the border with Lebanon. Millions of bullets were expended, but it later became clear that the flying object was a large kite which had probably been released by a playing child. ●

PFLP - General Command Operation

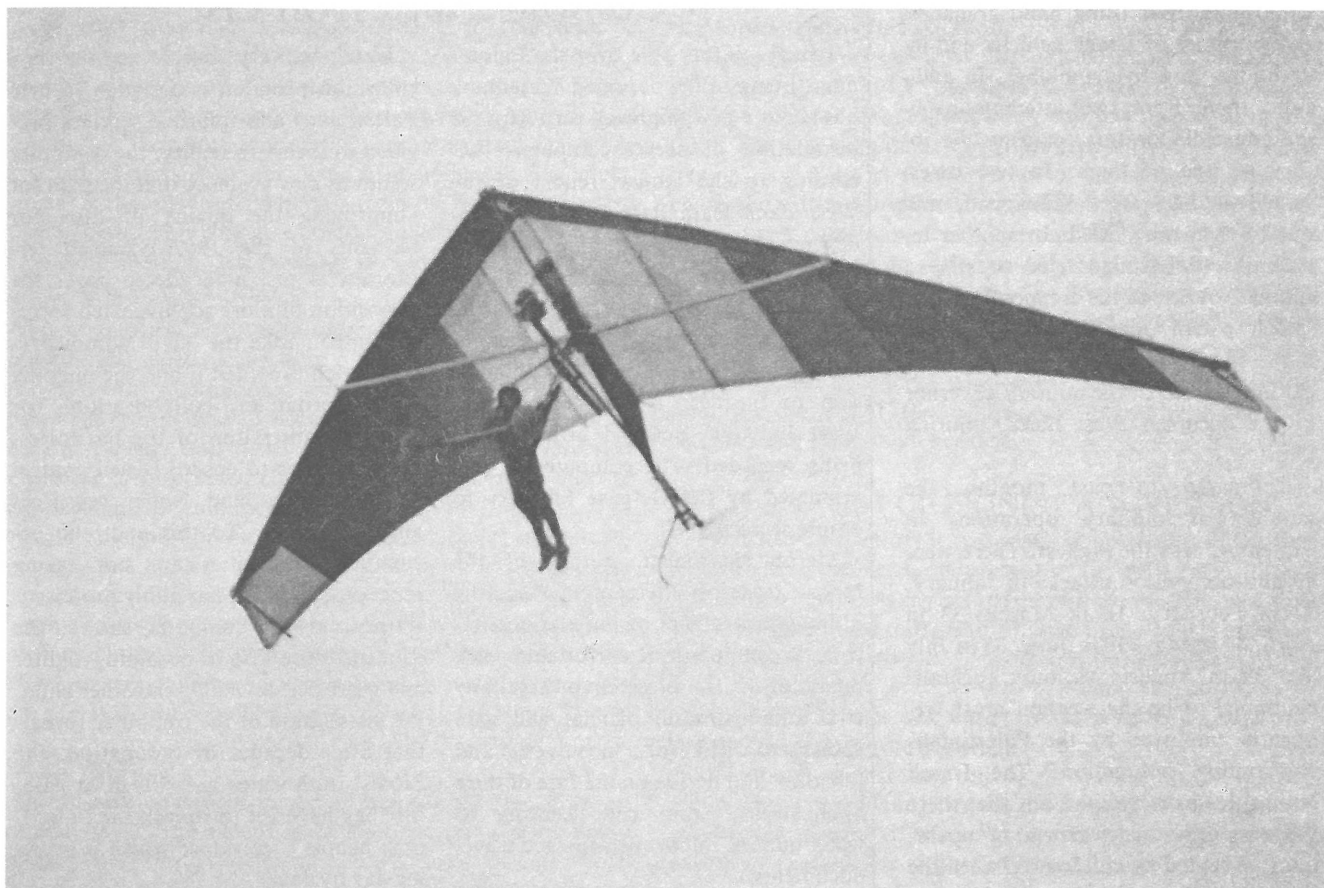
On the afternoon of November 25th, four pilots of the PFLP—General Command took off in hang gliders, headed for occupied Palestine. One of them, Khaled Ahmed Aker, succeeded in literally overflying the Zionists' security wall, and landed close to an Israeli army base in the northern Galilee, near Kiryat Shimona settlement. Another pilot, Milod Ben Al Najeh Noumah, was killed by the Israeli occupation forces, while the two others later returned to their base.

Khaled, who landed near the Israeli base, caught the enemy forces totally

off guard. He engaged the Zionist soldiers in an extended battle before being martyred. According to the Zionists' admissions, he killed six Israeli soldiers and seriously wounded seven others. The real casualty toll could be much higher.

In any case, this can only be termed the most successful Palestinian commando operation across the borders in a decade, in terms of the ingenuity and skill involved, and the number of casualties inflicted in the Zionist military ranks. Israeli Chief-of-Staff Shomron blamed laxity in the military

General Command hang glider



Highlights of Palestinian Struggle

Women Confronting Occupation Jerusalem, 1967

Aida is a Palestinian from Jerusalem. Her political involvement dates back to the sixties when the West Bank and East Jerusalem were under Jordanian control. Since that time, she has been active first in the ranks of the Arab Nationalist Movement and then in the PFLP. She has participated in all fields of struggle - political, military and mass work. Today she devotes her main energies to the work of the Palestinian Women's Organization.

I was still a student when I became interested in the Palestinian and Arab national cause - the struggle against the various Zionist, imperialist and reactionary plans against our people. It was the time of Nasser, the rise of the Arab national movement, demonstrations against the Baghdad Pact, etc. (The Baghdad Pact was a US project to group Middle East states in an anti-Soviet military axis, in the 1950s.) I was driven by nationalist feelings to participate in these activities. I remember one incident in particular. My school organized a field trip on the occasion of the Jordanian Army Day. On the way in the bus, we students were singing and shouting things unfavorable to the regime - and even against it. Afterwards, people from the Education Ministry and the authorities came to our school and warned us not to do such things again. The way they spoke to us really drove me into political involvement.

I read many books and attended meetings, but I didn't think about being organized. At first, I was inclined towards the Communist Party - some of my family were in the party, but I didn't have contact with them. Then it happened that a teacher I knew came to talk to me. Her brother was a leader in the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM - precursor of the PFLP). I visited them and through discussions, I was convinced to join the ANM in 1960.

After two meetings I became the women's responsible in Jerusalem, although I didn't yet feel completely prepared for this. However, others from Jerusalem, who had been studying in Cairo and Beirut (ANM centers at that time), or in Damascus, returned and gave me training. I gained contact to the leadership, and we organized ourselves as a cell. We began working among women, especially teachers and students, in the Jerusalem area and then in Ramallah. Within one year, we had about eighteen women and girls working with us. As we drew more women into the work, those who were organized became responsible for the others, which is how it should be.

PREPARING FOR LIBERATION

The first PNC, held in Jerusalem in 1964, gave a push to our work. It encouraged more Palestinians from different classes and groups, to take part in nationalist activities aimed at liberating our homeland from Zionist occupation. From 1965, we worked in the name of the PLO and the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW). We began to prepare people for the liberation struggle. We conducted first aid and literacy courses. I remember that of the ninety girls who graduated from one such six-month course, many went on to finish secondary school, and one later went to the university.

In that period we learned the value of working through existing legal societies whenever possible. For example, we were able to work through the schools and clinics of the Moqassad (Islamic Charitable Foundation), where much of the staff was politically conscious. We went to clinics and spoke to women about medical care while they were waiting to see the doctor. We introduced political ideas in relation to their own problems. We also went to villages where there were progressive doctors working. When going to the villages, we were careful to respect the traditions of the people there, which were often more strict than in a city like Jerusalem. We wore long sleeves and covered our heads. We always went directly to the mukhtar of the village. If we could convince him of the seriousness of our work and win his support, things were much easier. We were able to have activities in about 29 villages in this way, with the mukhtar's consent. We talked to the women there, and held literacy and sewing courses. In this way we created a circle of supporters much broader than the number of women who were actually organized. In some villages, we were given an empty house to use for our activities.

At first, it was hard for women to go out of the house. To deal with this, we would visit the homes of our members. We talked with the family until they felt confident that their daughters were safe with us. Sometimes this took two or three months. Then they might allow the daughter to leave the house for an hour. We were always careful that she returned on time. Then, later, when the family really had confidence in us, she could leave for a longer time. Often we held activities in people's homes; nobody refused to open their house for us. Sometimes we would gather as many as sixty women in a home for a public meeting. We would station one person at the door so that if the authorities came, she would begin beating a drum and we would all sing and dance as though it were a party.

In 1966, the Jordanian authorities began a campaign of repression against the nationalist movement. Many were arrested - from the Communist Party, the Baath Party, the Arab Nationalist Movement, etc. I was also arrested, as were others I worked with. The authorities closed down the GUPW center in Jerusalem. The work became much harder and we were not able to gather such large groups together at one place, but the people didn't stop. Some families were afraid for their daughters to associate with those of us who had been in prison, but usually the women themselves insisted on maintaining our friendship and work together. We had to learn to work in secret ways. By the time we were faced by the Israeli occupa-

tion in 1967, we had experience in both open and secret work. After the occupation, the same people from the villages, where we had gone to make meetings and classes, came to us saying: «You taught us - now what do you want us to do?» These women participated in the resistance to the new occupation in various ways. Those who had learned to type, typed statements against the occupation; others distributed these as handbills, etc. Some women visited the part of Palestine occupied in 1948, to gather information that could be useful to the resistance in planning anti-occupation actions.

CONFRONTING OCCUPATION

In the first days after the 1967 occupation, one of the main things was to prevent emigration, for it was the Israeli plan to have as many Palestinians as possible leave, to empty the occupied territories. Every morning at 3 a.m. there were announcements over loudspeakers in Jerusalem that buses were waiting at the Damascus gate to take anyone who wanted to the bridges to Jordan free of charge. Of course, some people who has family members outside wanted to go to join them. We went to the Damascus Gate every day to talk to people, to tell them that this was an Israeli plan to get them to leave their homeland for good, and to try to dissuade them from leaving.

Another thing we did was to campaign against buying the Israeli goods which flooded into the markets with the occupation. Of course, we couldn't stop this from happening, but we used it as an opportunity to make the people more aware of how the enemy was working to dominate us and destroy our own social and economic structures. We tried to keep people from going to buy Israeli goods in the other part of Jerusalem and 1948 occupied Palestine. At the beginning, the people refused to deal with the Israelis. Later, with the economic restrictions put by the occupation authorities, they were obliged to do so. In the beginning, people tried to buy as much as possible in Jordan, then return to the West Bank illegally. Some of these people were shot by the Israelis. They fell into the river and we never saw them again. Whenever such things happened, we would spread the information to the people so that they knew as much as possible about the enemy's practices.

TEACHER'S STRIKE

In the autumn after the June 1967 occupation, the Israelis tried to reopen the schools. The teachers went on strike because the Israelis were trying to replace them with less qualified teachers. We struggled with these new teachers not to accept the posts, and for four months, the strike continued. When it was over, many of the original teachers were unable to return to their jobs. We also mounted a campaign against the Israeli attempts to change the curriculum in the schools. (These changes consisted mainly of omitting certain chapters in schoolbooks about Palestine's history and geography.) We encouraged the people to refuse these changes and urged teachers not to follow them.

At the time of the strike, I was teaching mathematics and science at the UNRWA school in Shuafat, right outside Jerusalem. We were not allowed to be absent from work at the UNRWA schools, so we went each day for four hours, but did not go into the classrooms. Upon my suggestion, we teachers

sat and knit woolen pullovers for the fedayeen (freedom fighters). I had the job of standing at the door in the morning and explaining to the children that they should go home as we were on strike, protesting the occupation. One mother complained that I was preventing her child from going to school, and I was called in to the inspector's office. I said that it was a compliment to think that I was the one influencing all the other teachers to strike, for I was the youngest of them all. I explained that as a Palestinian, one could not be silent and let life go on as usual after the occupation. We had to make the parents understand that it wasn't because we didn't want to teach. In general, many of the UNRWA personnel were involved in anti-occupation activities. An inspector at another school carried weapons for operations in her car.

SUPPORTING THE FEDAYEEN

The same year the Israelis occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the PFLP was formed from the ANM. We women who were organized met in the name of the GUPW. We met with women all over the West Bank, to plan how to support the fedayeen who were coming back across the borders into Palestine to fight the occupation. The Israelis issued new identity cards after the occupation. The fedayeen usually came without such ID cards, so they needed help with this. They needed help in moving about and safe places to stay, etc. For such work, we involved only organized people or friends who were very loyal and trustworthy. It was my job to contact people to see if they were willing to help by keeping someone in their house, providing clothes, etc. I went all over the West Bank, and every two weeks to the Gaza Strip, to coordinate with the comrades there.

I remember an old woman in Jerusalem. She had an empty apartment in her house because her sister had married and moved away. She opened it for our use. She learned how to move about, for example to deliver messages, without anyone noticing she was doing anything out of the ordinary. Once, a comrade who had been staying in her house was arrested. She immediately came to me to arrange for moving his things without anyone noticing. This showed she had begun to feel responsible for our work. She gave shelter to many fedayeen. This old woman also joined her neighbors in organizing protest demonstrations against the Israelis' demolition of Palestinian homes.

Women began to come to us, saying they were ready to transport things needed by the fedayeen. Once we wanted to move weapons from Ramallah to Jerusalem. We asked a woman who had offered to help, and we made arrangements with a taxi driver whom we knew and trusted. He agreed to take us and a big bag without knowing the contents, only that they should be kept secret. We drove and he stopped a bit away from the checkpoint where the Israelis were. The woman carried the bag on her shoulder and passed safely through the hills to the other side of the street.

One day we learned there had been a big battle between the fedayeen and the occupation forces in Beit Fariq village. Nine fedayeen had been killed; another managed to escape, but he was wanted. He informed the comrades in Jerusalem that he was in hiding and needed help. I sent two young women to get him. Actually the Israelis had entered the house where he was,

but the family had found a way of hiding him: They put him on a big mattress on the floor, and then the grandmother got in the middle with all the children sleeping around her - and over him, so the Israelis didn't see him. Our two girls were able to go to the village and bring him back to Ramallah where we made an ID for him. Later this man and one of the girls met again at a base of the revolution in Jordan. They had not known each other by name before, only by face, but it was a nice reunion.

On Christmas Eve, the Israelis take special precautions to avoid anything happening in Bethlehem, to make it look as though the occupation is normal. The first year of the occupation, the Palestinian resistance planned to make an operation in Bethlehem to show that life was not going on as usual. We had three men arriving from Jordan to take part. We needed to help them move from Ramallah to Jerusalem to Bethlehem without ID cards. I went with one of them. We got on a bus separately, but managed to sit side by side. When the Israelis came to check, it was my job to laugh and joke with the soldier so he would forget to ask for the comrade's ID. It worked! In another case, a woman comrade carried bombs on a bus. She put them in a bag filled with apples. When the Israeli came and asked what was in the bag, she joked with him and offered him an apple, so he did not look in the bag.

At that time, we were able to utilize the Israeli perception of Arab women to our advantage. They didn't expect us to be involved in the struggle, so we were able to do things without being suspected. Incidentally, this is one of the things that is no longer the case. At that time, however, I was able to transport a typewriter to the comrades in the Gaza Strip by playing on my 'weakness' as a woman. I took a taxi with another woman. I wrapped my leg in a plaster cast as though it was broken and placed it over the typewriter. When we were stopped at an Israeli checkpoint, I 'tried' to get out of the car, but pretended I couldn't, so the Israeli soldier told me to remain sitting. I also avoided showing my ID by saying I didn't have one, because my name was written in my father's ID since I was not yet married.

Ordinary people also helped us completely spontaneously. Once when a woman comrade was accompanying one of the fedayeen onto a bus on the way to make an operation, a woman on the street whispered to them to warn him that his military fatigues were showing beneath his civilian pants.

RESOURCEFULNESS

We who were organized received training from the organization. There were guidelines for what to do in case of arrest, how to transport things secretly, etc. However, we had to rely on ourselves to a great extent. We learned through practice and spread our experience. We had experience from working in Jordan and on the West Bank under Jordanian control before the occupation. Once we had carried things, for which we could have received a death sentence, from Jerusalem via the West Bank to Irbid (Jordan), and back to Jerusalem.

It was our original intention to carry out more extensive political education and mass organization before launching armed struggle. There were always two aspects - working with people and at the same time preparing for the future. We

wanted to build a strong organization, so there were others to carry on if some were arrested or martyred. However, the course of events and the new occupation in 1967, forced armed struggle on us prematurely. In their enthusiasm, everyone wanted to engage in armed struggle immediately. I always stressed the need for prior training - political and military. Some women cadres went to Jordan for training and returned.

After the occupation people were generally willing to do whatever they could. Women and girls were quite resourceful. The first handbills against the occupation were written on typewriters and duplicated on machines we stole from the schools in the first days of chaos. It was all girls doing this work and bringing the materials. Some girls got the idea themselves to make a formal marriage with a comrade so that they could take a house to be used by the comrades. When the Israelis made a census in the first months after the occupation, they put different places under curfew on different days, and registered names. We were able to register in different places at different times to get extra ID cards. Later, there was strict registration of rented houses, so doing such things became more difficult.

In fact, most of the women's activities were ones they created themselves. We would sit down and discuss what to do, make practical suggestions and carry them out. For instance, we never had to ask directly for donations. We simply told people we wanted to do something, and they offered help. Young girls collected enough money for our activities in the Jerusalem - Ramallah area by such things as sewing and selling their embroidery work. All such work was done directly from the homes.

UNITY IN STRUGGLE

At this time in the occupied territories, there was no difference between the resistance organizations. Everyone was active together, organizing things together. Especially at the beginning, the comrades of the PFLP and Al Fatah organized many things together.

We tried to get everyone involved in the struggle according to their ability. We tried to get them to express their commitment in whatever way they could. We used the help of people who had not yet taken the step to total involvement, but we did this in a way not to endanger them, and we never lied to them, so they continued to support us.

We also taught people how to avoid giving the Israelis any information if they were asked about someone. We taught them to say «I don't know» to all questions to avoid bringing harm to themselves or others. Keeping quiet became completely natural for people. For instance, when my mother and sister were later interrogated about me, they said the same thing although they were questioned separately. They had gotten used to dealing with such things because they had helped a lot in our work without being organized. My mother and sisters typed and carried messages; they carried small packages without knowing the contents. They shared part of the work - aware of some things and unaware of others.

In working with women, we were careful to involve them in a way that would not totally disrupt their lives, so that they could work with us without, for example, quarrelling with their husbands. At the same time, we taught women who were ready

how to sacrifice their peaceful life in order to share in the struggle. We also discussed the importance of the woman's work with the husbands. In that period most of the people were quite traditional. It was difficult for women to be involved. For example, women never slept outside their homes, but parents began to allow this at the time that the armed struggle increased, for this gave a push to the participation of women. When the situation was most difficult, we found people becoming more free. However, when there was a lull in the struggle, people returned to thinking of the traditions.

WANTED!

In July 1968, several women comrades were arrested. On July 25th, I learned that I was wanted by the occupation authorities. I was accused of being the recipient of a bag sent from Jordan by one of those arrested. The next day, the Israelis came to my house, but I was already gone. The day before I had cleaned the house of all documents and told my mother I would sleep elsewhere - It was the first time I slept outside the home. I told her to tell anyone who came to ask for me that I would be back.

I went to all the comrades to tell them about the arrests. To be careful, I stopped the taxi away from their houses and walked from house to house. Then I went to the house of an old woman who was a dressmaker. Since she had guests, I said I had come to try on a dress and that my brother would pick me up. Of course, he did not come and it became late, so I could sleep there. The next day I sent a woman to tell my mother that I would be leaving. I told her that if anyone was there, to just say she had come to pick up my gradebooks - it was the end of the year and I needed to record the students' grades. She didn't come back so I sent another friend who found my house surrounded by Israeli forces. She pretended she was just passing on the way to somewhere else, but they stopped her and asked if she knew anyone from the house. She said no; she understood something was wrong. That day I had had an appointment to go to Nablus with another woman, and she was arrested when she came to my house.

When I learned of these things, I began walking on the road to Ramallah. It was very hot and there was no car, bus or taxi. Finally a friend stopped in a pickup truck with another person. I told him I wanted to visit his home and pressed his hand hard, so he would know there was something urgent. He dropped off the other person and returned and drove me to Ramallah. I went to the UNRWA office to collect my salary. Ironically, while I was there the Israelis called to inquire about me, but the person at UNRWA said I had a training course at the teachers' center. I waited in the office of a friend from Fatah for a comrade to come, so I could tell him to warn people not to go to my house. Then he told me where to go and I took a taxi to Nablus. I stayed with a family. After a week, there was heavy knocking on the door. The girl who opened the door was afraid the Israelis were looking for me, but it turned out they were asking about someone else. Still I was afraid, so I contacted the comrades to find a new place to stay. They arranged for me to stay with a middle-aged couple. I stayed there for 19 days; it was like being in prison; I stayed in a locked room and couldn't see anything but a cemetery from the window. Also, the woman asked so many questions that I felt

uneasy. Finally I left and arranged for another place to stay, telling this woman I was leaving for Jordan the next day anyway.

From the next house I stayed in, we organized a strike and demonstration, and sent petitions to the United Nations, protesting the arrests of the three women in Ramallah and Jerusalem. Of course, I and the comrade I was staying with couldn't go ourselves. Nobody knew I was there and she pretended to be sick. At this time I began planning how to leave the West Bank. I thought of trying to stay, for example working as a servant in someone's house in order not to be discovered, but the comrades decided that I should leave. A friend gave me West Bank identity papers which were different than those for Jerusalem. I went to a photographer to have pictures taken, saying I needed them to send to my fiancée in Jordan with someone who was traveling right away. One picture was for him and another was with my disguise - wig and glasses. The photographer was displeased because the picture was unclear, but I said I was in a hurry, and a friend got me a travel permit with the unclear picture.

I took a taxi to the Damia bridge. I had to wait one hour to get past the border. It was the longest hour of my life. I felt every Israeli soldier was looking at me. I played with the children of other people who were also waiting in order to keep my head down and turned away from the soldiers. Finally I passed the control and took a car to the Jordanian side. This was August 29, 1968. In Jordan, I went into the tent to register, saying I was coming to stay with my brother and giving a false name and address for him. The Jordanian policeman recognized me. By unlucky coincidence, he was one of those who had arrested me from my home in 1966. I insisted that it was not me, and finally he gave up. I entered Jordan and contacted our comrades there.

All the time I was wanted, I was careful not to endanger those who helped me hide. I never let my family know where I was since it was better for them really not to know if they were interrogated. I sent messages to Jordan which were then sent back to them in Jerusalem. In fact, no one I stayed with was arrested, but my mother and sisters were detained. My brother was held for four months although he had nothing to do with our work. The Israelis were waiting to see if I would return. Several friends who were not organized were arrested when they came to my house unawares after I left. One of them was an older man. The Israelis beat him so badly that when he came out, he said, «Now I am organized!» Later he joined the struggle. When I left the West Bank, there were over seventy women working with us in the Jerusalem and Ramallah area. Of course, the struggle has grown since then, despite arrests and deportations.



Mass Resistance

September has been a month of massacres against the Palestinian people living in dispersion outside their homeland. Every year, Palestinians express their oneness in the face of attempts to liquidate their cause, highlighting that the real remedy against massacres is fulfillment of Palestinian rights to repatriation and statehood. This year, Palestinians living under occupation commemorated the 17th anniversary of Black September in Jordan, and the fifth anniversary of the Sabra-Shatila massacre in Lebanon.

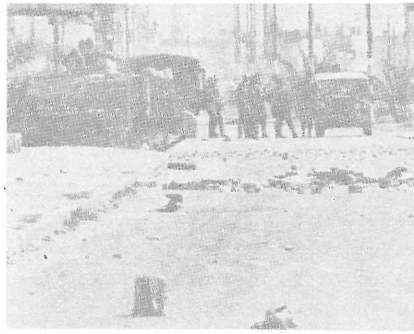
The masses challenged the Zionists' ban on Sabra-Shatila demonstrations. In Haifa, Jaffa, Jerusalem, Ramallah, Al Bireh, Nablus and Gaza, they took to the streets, raising Palestinian flags and shouting their condemnation of the occupation. In Balata refugee camp near Nablus, Zionist soldiers opened fire on the people, killing a child on September 15th. Several other civilians were injured in the ensuing days, and hundreds were arrested in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Galilee. Hebron University was ordered closed for two weeks.

The Sabra-Shatila commemoration reinforced the unity in struggle between Palestinians in the 1967 and 1948 occupied territories - a unity which had also been seen on September 1st, when West Bank and Gaza Strip residents joined the strike called by the Regional Committee of Arab Municipalities to protest the Zionist government's decision to reduce the educational budget for the Arab sector.

There were several other demonstrations during the month, and on September 7th, Bir Zeit University students suspended classes to mourn the martyrs of the Israeli attack on Ain Al Hilweh camp two days before, which killed over forty people. Also in September, there were hunger strikes by Palestinian political prisoners in Bir Al Saba, Tul-karm, Asqalan and Fara'a prisons.

THE OCTOBER UPRISING

The mass uprising was at a peak during October. Added to the ongoing



The occupation troops close the road to the Islamic University in Gaza.

Israeli occupation and oppression, three events played a role in raising the temperature of the October uprising: the killing of four Palestinian freedom fighters on October 7th, the October 11th attempt of Zionist extremists to storm Al Aqsa mosque, and US Secretary of State Schultz's visit to occupied Palestine. The occupation troops, for their part, used live ammunition to try and suppress the demonstrations.

On October 2nd, an Israeli military spokesman claimed that the occupation forces had shot and killed three Palestinians in Gaza for refusing to stop their car at a checkpoint outside Bureij refugee camp.

The statement came ten hours after the incident, the Zionists having imposed a total news blackout in the interim. On October 15th, three Israeli newspapers and the army radio carried reports that conflicted with the military spokesman's version of the incident. *Maariv*, *Yediot Ahronot* and *Haaretz* reported the men might have died after being tortured, before or after the incident at the roadblock. The brother and father of two of the martyrs were quoted by *Haaretz* as saying, «There were signs of torture» on two of the bodies, that one was missing an eye, and the other's face was disfigured. Some of the bullet wounds were in the front of the bodies, contradicting the army's account that they were shot as they fled. Israeli army radio identified one of the victims as an escapee from a Gaza prison, Mossbah Hassan Al Souiri, age 34, saying he might have been taken into custody and tortured.

As reported by the Palestinian Press Service, Bureij residents deny that there were roadblocks in the area that day. The agency noted that the army originally reported two Palestinians shot dead, then changed the figure to three later (Associated Press, October 19th).

PROTESTING MURDER

The masses' reaction was quick. On October 3rd, nearly 5,000 students of the Islamic University in Gaza went on strike, protesting the killings. The next day, demonstrations broke out in other places in the Gaza Strip.

On October 7th, a Palestinian commando group clashed with the Israeli occupation forces in Gaza. Four Palestinians were martyred, while an Israeli Shin Bet officer, identified as Victor Arguan, was killed. The occupation forces combed the area and arrested a large number of Palestinians. Angered by the new killings and arrests, the people of Gaza staged a general strike and demonstrations.

On October 9th, a court in Acca extended the administrative detention of four Palestinians for chanting nationalist songs!

On October 10th, 24 Palestinians were wounded in Gaza as demonstrations continued. Nearly 1,500 gathered in the city center and set tires ablaze, while most shops closed down. The Palestinian Press Service reported at least thirteen wounded during a demonstration at the Islamic University; many of them had to be treated on the spot, because the occupation troops blockaded the area and prevented the entry of ambulances.

AL AQSA DEFENDED

On October 11th, the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem, site of Al Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock, became the scene of a fierce confrontation between the Palestinian masses and the Israeli occupation forces, complementing the week-long uprising in the Gaza Strip. Zionist troops savagely dispersed a demonstration of nearly 2,000 Palestinians who were blocking the entry of two dozen



Palestinian overwhelmed by tear gas at Al Aqsa, October 11th

right-wing Jewish extremists trying to invade Al Aqsa. Israeli soldiers fired tear gas, smoke bombs and live bullets in the air in a confrontation that lasted nearly an hour. The Palestinians succeeded in preventing the extremists from entering the mosque. Fifty Palestinians were seriously injured and twelve were arrested. In protest, Old City shops closed.

The same day, demonstrations broke out anew in Gaza. People burned tires and blockaded streets. Ten Palestinians were arrested. The next day, AP wrote that the «city of 150,000 on the Mediterranean Sea... appeared to be under siege.»

MOTHER SHOT DOWN

On October 12th, there was a big demonstration in Ramallah, protesting the occupation troops' brutality in the Old City the day before. The Israeli soldiers opened fire on the demonstra-

tors, killing Mrs. Enayeh Samir Hindi, 35 years old and the mother of five, as she passed by. Scores of Palestinians were injured, including three women.

Shops in Ramallah and East Jerusalem shut down. Some one hundred high school students were arrested in Ramallah. Protest demonstrations broke out in major West Bank and Gaza towns and camps, and continued over the ensuing days, in concert with a general strike. In Bir Zeit, students marched with a symbolic coffin for the martyred Palestinian mother, waving Palestinian flags and chanting anti-occupation slogans. The occupation authorities closed Bir Zeit University for four days. In Al Bireh, women students staged a sit-in at the Red Crescent office, protesting the murder of Mrs. Hindi.

Meanwhile, fifty Palestinian families from Kafr Kisan village, near Bethlehem, staged a silent demonstration protesting the occupation authorities'

order to demolish 21 houses, as preparation for a new Israeli settlement. Benjamin Bel-Eliezar, former military governor of the West Bank, said that the Palestinians have become bolder in attacking the Israelis. He predicted that the situation in the occupied territories would deteriorate further.

SCHULTZ REBUFFED

On October 15th, hundreds of Bir Zeit students demonstrated against the three-day visit of George Schultz to occupied Palestine, setting the tone for the appropriate Palestinian «welcome» to this US official.

The student council president said that «the reception that Jimmy Carter and others have found here will be repeated for Schultz,» referring to the large demonstrations in 1979 against Carter's visit. For five days, the occupied territories resounded with cries of «Down with Schultz» and «Long Live the PLO» as Palestinians demonstrated. Shops remained closed in Jerusalem and Ramallah. In the 1948 occupied territories, 47 municipalities staged a two-hour strike, protesting Israeli repression in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On October 18th, eight Palestinian notables boycotted a scheduled meeting with the US Secretary of State.

On October 17th, four Palestinians were wounded when Israeli soldiers fired on their car near Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip. A military spokesman claimed that they had refused to stop at a roadblock. Mass demonstrations continued, and on October 24th, a Palestinian youth was seriously wounded when the Israeli forces opened fire in Nablus. An Israeli military spokesman claimed that he was throwing stones at the military governor's headquarters, and that he was mentally retarded. The next day, the occupation authorities ordered the closure of Hatem Al Tai school in Khan Younis until November 10th, after a week of stonethrowing by the students. Five other high schools in the Gaza Strip were closed for a week each during the month of October, while the Islamic University was closed for three days. The military commander of the central region ordered the closure of the Palestinian Press Service in Nablus,

and the director, Mohammad Omeirah, was detained on charges of having contact to Fatah. According to Palestinian sources, his wife was also detained.

Nearly five months ago, the Israeli army encircled Duheisheh refugee camp, near Bethlehem, with a fifteen-foot high fence, to prevent stonethrowing against Israeli vehicles. In the current round of uprising, a curfew was slapped on the camp on October 13th. However, these measures proved ineffective as Duheisheh residents continued their acts of resistance. On October 26th, Israeli forces raided the camp and conducted house-to-house searches, rounding up several hundred for identity checks and arresting eighteen of them. The next day, ten others were arrested. Col. Zeev, an Israeli commander in the West Bank, told the army radio, «They (Palestinians) were coming around the fences and throwing stones. We can't put a soldier for every meter». The curfew on the camp was extended

KAFR QASEM REMEMBERED

October 29th was the anniversary of the 1956 massacre at Kafr Qasem, where 49 Palestinian civilians were shot dead upon returning to their village from the fields at dusk, not having been informed that a curfew had been

imposed on that, the first day of the 1956 aggression on Egypt.

On October 28th this year, Bethlehem University students demonstrated in memory of the 31st anniversary of this massacre. The Israeli forces opened fire. Issac Abu Srour, a 22 year old student, was shot in the head and hospitalized in critical condition. The university was ordered closed for three months.

In Gaza, students erected barricades and set tires ablaze on October 29th, as soldiers fired in the air to disperse them. Shops closed in the city to protest the demolition of four houses. A Palestinian reported that Israeli troops had imposed a curfew at about midnight, giving families thirty minutes to evacuate their belongings before the houses were destroyed (AP, October 30th). There were also demonstrations in the West Bank, and new military checkpoints were set up throughout the occupied territories. Reinforcements were sent to a number of towns and camps.

On October 30th, there was a general strike in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to commemorate the Kafr Qassem massacre. Issac Abu Srour died of the wounds he had suffered two days before. Residents of Aida camp, near Bethlehem, the martyr's home, demonstrated against his killing.

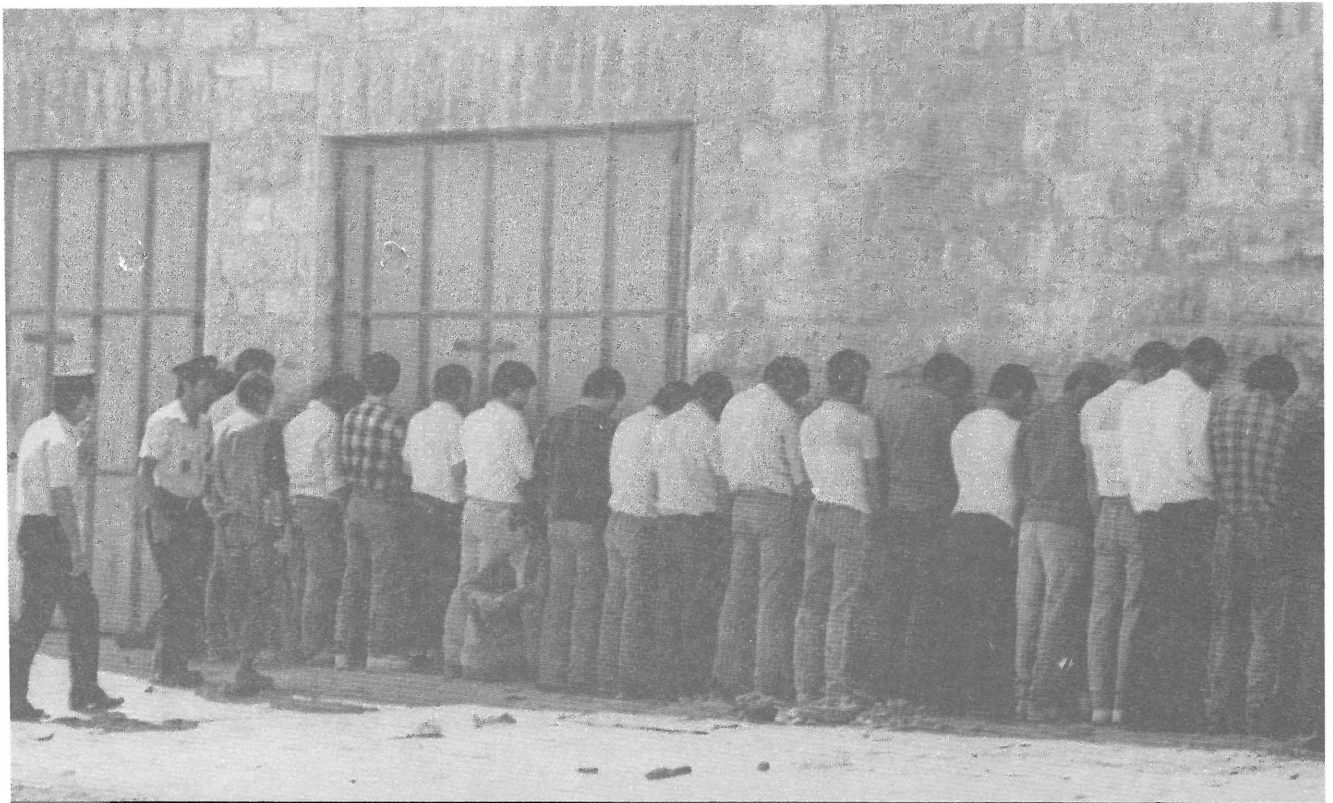
ASSESSMENT

The October uprising encompassed the 1967 occupied territories with few exceptions. In the Gaza Strip, the uprising spread to all towns, villages and camps, spurred on by the intensification of Zionist repression following the military operations in the Strip. In the West Bank, the uprising was concentrated in the Jerusalem and Ramallah area, based on the effectiveness of the national institutions and forces, especially in Ramallah, and due to the events at Al Aqsa. Besides the students' active role, various sectors of the Palestinian people participated in the uprising - shopkeepers, workers, women and some clergymen.

The scope and militancy of the uprising confirmed the strength of the PLO, especially in view of its reunification. The PLO's effectiveness was seen in the two-day general strike, and its warning to some Palestinian figures about the visit of George Schultz. The PLO's position against the visit, and the broad mass response contained the role of reactionary figures.

The uprising continued into November despite the broad repression exercised by the Zionist forces. During October, well over 600 Palestinians were arrested; 228 were detained in the Gaza Strip alone during the first four days of the uprising. ●

Palestinians rounded up after stonethrowing incident in Anabta camp.



The Upr Palestinian Fists Cha

In the second week of December the Israeli forces had to reoccupy the occupied territories in confronting a mass uprising by the Palestinian people. In this war of December 1987, casualties among the Palestinian civilians were more than 40 deaths and 500 injuries. The Israeli authorities opened 3 concentration camps in Al Thahirya and Al Far'ah in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip to detain more than 2,500 Palestinians. This uprising gained worldwide support because of our people's heroic confrontation to the Zionist forces. *As we go to print the uprising continues with full force.*



ising llenge the Iron Fist

The 8th of December will be remembered as a bright point in the struggle of the Palestinian people to accomplish their national rights of return, self determination and an independent Palestinian state. That date was the beginning of the heroic uprising of the Palestinian people which started in the Gaza Strip after Palestinian masses went to the headquarter of the military governor, surrounded it and started to chant slogans against occupation and to throw stones and molotov cocktails. This mass unrest immediately spread to cities and villages of the West Bank. Our heroic people introduced a new weapon in confronting the occupation forces, iron bars were

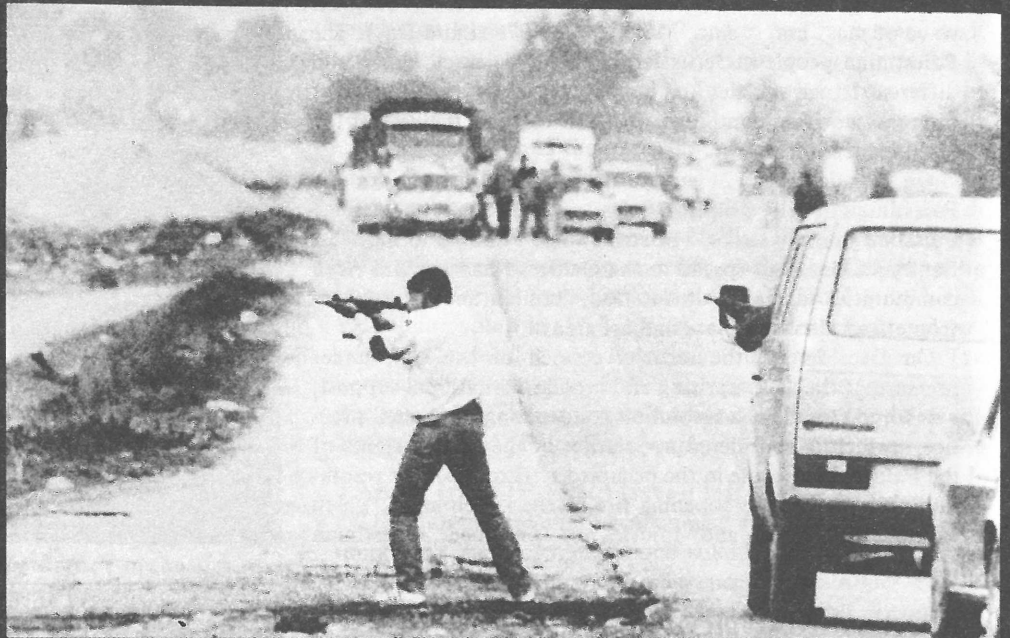
used in attacking the Zionist soldiers in addition to stones, knives and molotov cocktails. The Zionist state, from the beginning of the uprising, replied with iron-fist measures that only remind of the measures taken in Nazi Germany or by the racist regime in South Africa. The occupation forces replied with bullets and teargas and later introduced tanks and helicopters. The Zionist entity also expressed its so called humanitarianism by forbidding ambulances to transport injured people to hospitals.

When the uprising entered its second week, the Zionist forces lost control of the situation to the extent that on Dec. 15th, the ▶

Confronting the occupation



Settlers shooting at civilians



Palestinians confront the Zionist soldiers



commander of the middle area, Gen. Amram Mitzna and the head of the civil administration, Gen. Shimal Gorin asked the demonstrators to avoid engagements with the Zionist forces and said they would ask the army not to fire at Palestinians. By that time, Palestinian people in «Israel» took part in the uprising. Mass meetings took place in Nazareth and Oum al Fahem in support of the uprising.

On Dec. 17 th, Zionist forces under the mass resistance of our people in Gaza, were forced to withdraw their tanks. On that same day, the occupied Golan Heights had a mass demonstration in support of the uprising.

On Dec. 18 th, the uprising increased in momentum specifically after the announcement by the PLO that the following Monday 21 st would be the day of steadfastness for the Palestinian people. On that day, mayors of Arab cities and villages in «Israel» called for a general strike on Monday 21 st in support of the PLO call.

On Saturday Dec. 19 th, occupied Jerusalem saw the biggest wave of mass unrest since March 30 th 1976 (Land Day). The Palestinian people in Jerusalem attacked 4 Israeli banks and different Israeli vehicles and police stations. At the same time, the mass uprising continued with full force in the rest of the occupied territories.

On Monday Dec. 21 st, the day of steadfastness for the Palestinian people, 2 million Palestinians throughout occupied Palestine went on strike. The strike wasn't limited to the West Bank and Gaza but spread to the Galilee, Nazareth and Arab communities in Haifa, Jaffa, Lod, Ramleh and Acre. Confrontations also took place in these areas.

On Dec. 23 rd, the security council of the UN, under pressure of the mass uprising and broad international support, was forced to adopt a resolution condemning the Israeli practice, «which is considered a violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories». The resolution also condemned «opening fire by the Israeli army, which caused the death and injuries of unarmed Palestinian civilians».



An Israeli soldier retreating from Palestinians in Gaza

ZIONIST REACTION TO THE UPRISING

Few weeks before the uprising, the president of the Zionist entity proudly said in Washington that the Arab-Israeli conflict did not represent a danger to peace in the Middle East and that the Palestinian cause doesn't have priority in the area. The validity of what Chaim Herzog said seemed true, specially after the Arab summit in Amman. But what took place during the uprising and what was seen on TVs worldwide proved that our people have the ability to revitalize the cause.

The oppressive Israeli reaction manifested the fear that our people caused within the Zionist society. A *Reuters* agency correspondent in a report about the uprising said, «the uprising reached an intensity that took the Israeli politicians and journalists by surprise. Some military leaders were forced to call through governmental radios their people to calm down because the army controls the situation».

The uprising caused confusion and disorder within the Zionist government. Prime minister Yitzak Shamir, one week after the beginning of the uprising sounded confident in saying, «it is temporary..., there is no need to carry any change in the current security policy for the areas». And he stressed that «the security forces have full control of the situation» (14.12.87). But one day after that, Zionist sources had to admit, that there is a war situation and Shamir threatened to close the West Bank and Gaza and to consider it a military zone. On

Dec. 16 th Shamir condemned the Israeli public opinion for the defeatist position that it took. On Dec. 17 th, Shamir called upon his forces to avoid causing deaths because «every casualty turns into a human bomb against us». But in the same day he again said, «Israel is not concerned about more losses of lives». Chaim Bar-Lev, the minister of police announced, «we must work for a political solution as if terrorism didn't exist and we must strike terrorism as if a political process didn't exist».

Other sections within the Zionist society were forced to be more objective in analysing the situation. Yossi Serid, the Knesset member, said that what is taking place is civil disobedience and that there is an increasing Palestinian control over the camps and that the Israeli forces lost control of some of them. Azar Weizman, the state minister replied to Shamir's announcement and said, «who thinks that this is a temporary thing is making a big mistake». The Israeli historian Yahosha Boret was quoted saying in the *Jerusalem Post* of Dec. 14 th that «the events this time in the territories appear to be a beginning for a popular revolution because it seems as a mass movement that women and children participate in, in addition for being popular overt actions and not single incidents or secret operations carried out by terrorist cells». The *Ha'aretz* newspaper in an editorial on Dec. 16 th titled «Big mouth and slow brain» - referring to Shamir - said «he must decide whether it is a dangerous or a temporary situation because it can not be

both at the same time». The same day, the *Al Hamishmar* newspaper condemned the policies of the government and called for a political solution that «will rid Israel from ruling other people» and said that «the sole reason for the uprising is refusing the occupation and the determination to confront it».

On Dec. 26 th 2,000 Israelis from the «Peace Now» movement demonstrated in front of the residence of the Israeli prime minister Yitzak Shamir in occupied Jerusalem. The demonstrators condemned the Israeli practices in the occupied territories and called for peace. The Israeli police used teargas to disperse the demonstrators in an attempt to silence critical voices within the Israeli society.

THE NATURE OF THE UPRISING

On Dec. 20 th, in a political analysis on Israeli radio, the reasons for the uprising were stated as follows: 1. An accident between an Israeli army truck and a Palestinian civilian station wagon which caused the death of 4 workers and the injury of 7 others. 2. The 20 th anniversary of the PFLP, which led the PFLP members to instigate the unrest. 3. That «terrorist» organizations outside called for the mass unrest. Though all these factors could have played a role in the timing of the uprising, it would be oversimplistic to try to explain by them the magnitude and duration of the uprising. The Israeli radio analysis tried to cloak the main reason because of the official Israeli line negating the existence of the Palestinians as a people.

The main cause of the uprising is the inherent contradiction between the occupier and the occupied, the oppressor and the oppressed. This contradiction can only be solved by two means: Either eliminating the existence of the people occupied, as took place with the native Americans, or ending the occupation. Lessons throughout history leave no place for surprises when mass revolts take place in countries that are occupied. What is taking place in occupied Palestine falls in the same category as what took place in France during the German occupation, in Algeria during the French occupation or to what is taking place in South Africa.

The uprising is qualitatively particular compared with previous uprisings of our people. Therefore we call it a landmark in the Palestinian national liberation movement. But at the same time, it would be wrong to look at what is taking place as the final battle with the Zionist enemy because this view will create illusions. Such illusions could lead not only to despair among our people but also to wrong political steps such as the creation of a temporary government in exile.

The particularity of this uprising is that it represents the first rehearsal for the battle of accomplishing Palestinian rights. But it is clear that many other rehearsals are needed with new factors involved specifically the elevation of the role of the frontstates in supporting our people, before accomplishing victory.

THE UPRISING, A RESPONSE TO THE DECLINE IN OFFICIAL ARAB POLICIES

The uprising in occupied Palestine came at a time when the official Arab policies reached a new low after the Amman summit (see Arab summit article). Our Palestinian masses answered the attempt to downplay the role of the PLO by full adherence to the PLO which was manifested in the slogans of the Palestinian people and by refusing all other alternatives. The Palestinian people clearly stated their refusal of the Jordanian option and the plans of self administration.

This uprising was a clear response to the ideas that the Middle East problem is a problem of border disputes between the Arab countries and «Israel». It showed that the core of the problem is the question of the Palestinian national rights of return, self determination and an independent Palestinian state. The popular revolt shows that regardless of the attempts of reactionary Arab governments to push the Palestinian question into the background, this is still the central question in the Arab world. Our people in occupied Palestine through their continuing uprising were able to deal a severe blow to all forces who try to divide the Palestinian people. The uprising manifested the unity of our people in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the 1948 occupied territories and the Diaspora. This also showed the dialectical relationship between the unity of the PLO and the elevation of Palestinian mass struggle.

The Palestinian mass revolt in the occupied territories shows the Palestinian ability to adjust to the objective conditions surrounding their cause. After the exodus of the Palestinian revolution from Lebanon in 1982 and the difficult situation it still faces because of attempts of Arab governments to liquidate the PLO, our masses in the occupied territories, the revolution's first base, were able to revitalize our cause. The uprising also showed the importance of all forms of struggle, mass, armed, political and diplomatic.

Our masses in this uprising were able to ridicule the Israeli theory of permanent occupation. The Israelis were betting that the generation that grew up under occupation will adjust to life under Israeli rule. But what took place in Palestine proves that Palestinian youth in the occupied territories are just as determined in achieving the Palestinian inalienable rights. The uprising showed that even the supremacy of the Israeli army that was able to defeat several Arab armies could not defeat the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

TASKS IN SUPPORTING THE UPRISING

The Palestinian contingents must show responsibility in supporting the uprising through solidifying the unity of the PLO which calls upon the adherence to the Algier PNC's resolutions and the rejoining of contingents still outside the framework of the PLO. The PLO leadership must facilitate all support to our masses in the occupied territories and must reconsider its working program and give priority to the issue of supporting our people in the occupied territories.

This uprising calls upon Syria, which remains the only frontstate in opposition to the imperialist-Zionist plans, to reassess its relations with the PLO and to materialize its support to the uprising by restoring the alliance with the sole legitimate representative of our people, the PLO. Patriotic Arab regimes have the task of elevating their support to our masses from a vocal to a concrete support through restoring the Arab steadfastness and confrontation front.

The Lebanese National Movement has the task of supporting the uprising first and foremost by forcing an end to the siege and war against the camps by the Amal movement and rebuilding the Lebanese-Palestinian alliance.

The task of the Egyptian masses and their nationalist forces is to act with all forms to support the uprising, demand the recalling of the Egyptian ambassador from the Zionist entity, closing down the Israeli embassy in Egypt and to fight against Camp David until abrogating it. The task of all forces of the Arab liberation movement is to unify their efforts against the imperialist-Zionist aggression, to act immediately with all forms and to initiate the formation of suitable organizations and frameworks to support our people's uprising.

PLO Central Council Meeting

On October 5-7th, in Tunis, the PLO's Central Council held its first session since the April PNC.

The Central Council session was opened with roll call. Present were 66 Central Council members, more than the two-thirds quorum required. Then the agenda of the meeting was announced to be as follows:

1. the Executive Committee's political report and discussion;
2. the situation in the occupied homeland;
3. the situation in Lebanon;
4. the secretariat;
5. internal rules and regulations;
6. selection of the drafting committee;
7. other subjects proposed and agreed upon by the council.

A comprehensive report was presented by PLO Executive Committee Chairman Yasir Arafat, reviewing the political developments on the Palestinian and Arab levels, and the Executive Committee's activities since the April PNC.

Abu Jihad, head of the PLO committee on the occupied land and Fatah Central Committee member, presented a report covering the situation in occupied Palestine. He stressed the necessity of safeguarding the land and developing a Palestinian national economy.

Salah Salah, head of the Palestinian National Work Committee in Lebanon and PFLP Politbureau member, followed with a report on the situation in Lebanon. He emphasized the importance of Amal President Nabih Berri's initiative to end the camp war. He added that nonetheless, given past experience, caution should be exercised, particularly after Amal had sabotaged the implementation of the September 11th agreement signed in Sidon.

Abu Mazen, member of the PLO Executive Committee, presented a report dealing with the PLO's relations with Israeli forces. He attempted to justify such contacts, claiming they would raise conflict in the Zionist entity, leading more Jewish forces to recognize Palestinian rights. Nonetheless,



less, he emphasized that such contacts were not an alternative to armed struggle and other forms of struggle, for without this no Jewish forces would have recognized Palestinian rights. He said that such contacts were not negotiations, but a form of dialogue with forces and figures opposed to occupation.

Discussions followed these presentations. The first to open the discussion was PFLP Secretary General George Habash, who delivered an important, comprehensive speech (see text in this issue). The council's discussions were characterized by seriousness and a sense of commitment, focusing on several topics, the most important of which are covered below.

RELATIONS WITH EGYPT

Concerning this issue, three trends emerged in the discussions.

The first trend rejects contacts with the Egyptian regime as long as it adheres to the Camp David accords. The proponents of this trend argue that such contacts harm the PLO's unity and its international and Arab alliances. This trend was articulated by the Palestinian revolutionary democratic forces.

The second trend was very enthusiastic about the PLO's relations with the Egyptian regime, noting Egypt's importance and weight. The advocates of this trend have the illusion that these contacts will pull Egypt away from Camp David. This trend was advocated

by Executive Committee member Jamal Al Sourani and Fatah Central Committee member Hani Al Hassan who even called for the Camp David regime's return to the Arab fold.

The third trend attempted to set standards and restrictions for the PLO's relations with the Egyptian regime. The supporters of this middle-of-the-road trend don't overestimate the possibility of these relations pulling Egypt away from Camp David. However, they reject severing these relations, in order to avoid negative repercussions for the PLO. They called for establishing standards to govern these relations, and for studying the effects of these relations with the Arab national liberation movement and some regimes.

RELATIONS WITH ISRAELIS

There were four views on this issue:

1. The representatives of the Arab Liberation Front registered reservations on relations with Israeli forces, citing the eventual harm they do to the Arab and Palestinian struggle.

2. Some called for concentrating on contacts with Israeli forces who are serious in their support of Palestinian rights and enjoy a degree of influence. Close coordination with RAKAH, the Israeli Communist Party, was called for.

3. The PFLP's representatives called for limiting these relations to democratic, anti-Zionist, Israeli forces. The PFLP considers that establishing contacts with Zionist forces weakens the conditions for confronting the Zionist project and state, especially given the UN resolution on Zionism as a racist ideology.

4. The fourth trend pressed for going beyond the PNC resolutions adopted on this issue. It called for establishing contacts with any Jewish forces that recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

RELATIONS WITH SYRIA

The different views on this issue converged on the necessity of reconciliation between the PLO and Syria. The Central Council praised the Executive Committee's efforts to this end.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Although there was overall agreement on the PNC resolution on the international conference, discrepancies arose concerning the essence of the tactics to be followed in this period. Some considered that talking about a joint Arab delegation to the conference would not detract from the importance of the PLO's role and participation.

However, the majority of those who spoke out thought that such talk amounted to offering concessions without getting anything in return. Given the absence of a unified Arab position, and the obstacles to the convening of an international conference, the majority did not feel such talk would consolidate the PLO's role, but rather would lay the ground for more concessions once the conference process gets underway.

THE ARAB SUMMIT

The speakers dealt very seriously with the convening of the Arab summit (since held in Amman - editor's note), which follows several important developments: worldwide support to the idea of an international peace conference, the Soviet-US agreement on medium-range nuclear weapons, and the upcoming Gorbachev-Reagan summit. All speakers stressed that the summit should produce Arab solidarity antagonistic to imperialism and Zionism, and a joint Arab position concerning developments in the region, particularly the Palestinian issue.

ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES

Organizational issues were considered to be of great importance to the participants in the discussion, unlike in the past when these have generated little interest. The speakers dealt with Comrade Habash's speech concerning the importance of democratic reform in the PLO institutions and of the Central Council acting on its new tasks as out-

lined in the last PNC session. Most speakers voiced support to these points. This led the council to adopt several directives for the Executive Committee, in cooperation with the PNC President, to start preparing for a PNC to be held in April, after selection of the membership for the 7th PNC's term, as required by the expiration of the 6th PNC's term in April.

The Central Council decided to delay discussing and adopting the internal rules and regulations to govern its own activities, even though this was on the agenda. The delay was due to the Executive Committee's failure to have formed a committee to draft the rules and regulations in advance. As a result, the draft was hastily written, making it impossible for the council members to study it carefully. Nonetheless, the council did elect a temporary secretariat to assist the PNC president until a set of rules and regulations is adopted at the next council meeting. The secretariat will consequently become permanent in accordance with the PNC's resolution.

The final statement was prepared by the drafting committee and presented to the council. It sidestepped major controversial issues. (See text in this issue.)

With that, the council ended its session. On the political level, the council meeting failed to take a strong stand against the violations of the PNC resolutions that have occurred. Thus, it passed up the chance to further strengthen national unity and impose adherence to the adopted resolutions. On the organizational level, on the other hand, the election of a secretariat and presen-

tation of a draft for the internal rules and regulations, are positive steps in the process of democratic reform.

Despite shortcomings, the holding of the council was positive in itself. It shattered the dreams of those hostile forces who, angered by the PLO's reunification, believed that the unity was short-lived. Palestinian national unity has, on the contrary, been preserved, based on the lessons derived from the bitter experience of past division.

emphasized in conclusion: First, national unity needs to be further consolidated and this requires strict adherence to PNC resolutions. Violating these resolutions can only harm unity and ultimately enforce the divisive hopes of hostile forces. Second, crystalizing a clear political line as the basis for the PLO's activities, plus comprehensive democratic reform in the PLO's institutions, would safeguard the PLO's role and status. Third, the PLO should carefully address the issues, with a clear sense of priorities, rather than confining itself to general political rhetoric. For example, it is not enough to voice support to an international conference. Close study is required to act on this position meaningfully.

This is not, however, to detract from the achievements made since the PNC's unification session in April. The important thing is to continue such achievements to the point that the PLO is capable of fulfilling the Palestinian people's goals of return to the homeland, self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. ●

Comrade Habash Addresses the Council

The speech of Comrade George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP, at the PLO Central Council meeting focused on two major topics. The first was the necessity of enacting radical democratic reform in all the PLO bodies and institutions. The second was how to deal with the most prominent political developments affecting the Palestinian arena, in accordance with the resolutions adopted at the PNC's unifying session in April. Following are excerpts.

The experience of all societies throughout history has shown that democracy and democratic rules in-

fluence the society's ability to provide the foundation for the masses' creativity and energy. Ongoing events ►

in the Soviet Union, particularly after the CPSU's 27th congress, indicate the importance of democracy. On the other hand, there is the situation in the Arab world where some regimes have used economic and political advances to obscure the question of democracy. This points to the importance of democracy and to the negative effects on the society when democracy is lacking.

Undoubtedly, the issue of democracy is relevant to the Palestinian people. We can even say that our need for democracy, for mobilizing the capabilities of every Palestinian, is an urgent need, particularly in view of the nature of the conflict in which our masses are a major party.

Can we say that the existence of free speech, which we are proud of in the Palestinian arena, is democracy? The answer is no! Free speech constitutes only one aspect of democracy. It does not encompass the full scope or meaning of democracy. After instituting free speech and developing democratic concepts, the method should be outlined whereby the will of the society can be extracted and materialized... In this way, we could reach decisions despite the multiplicity of opinions.

My aim is to point to the importance of the PLO institutions, through which democracy could be achieved...

THE PNC AND PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

According to the PLO's internal regulations, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) should convene every year; every four years, the membership of the council should be selected anew. In the past, due to both internal and external reasons, the PNC did not convene every year. Thus, in practice, a new council has been selected about every three sessions of the PNC (editor's note).

According to the organizational rules, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) should convene once a year. Therefore a new session should be held in April next year. It is well-known that the term of the presiding council (the 6th) with its old composition, has expired. Thus, a new PNC should be formed. This raises the question of whether we are ready to conduct a courageous and scientific evaluation capable of overcoming the discrepancies of the past. This demands that we take continuous, cumulative steps towards achieving democracy.

There have been discrepancies in the composition of the preceding councils. Some felt that when the PNC convened, it was an occasion for the minority to exercise its dictatorship over the majority, the majority being forced to say yes to the minority in order to protect national unity. Others contend that the PNC's composition allows for the hegemony of a single faction. Isn't there a solution that satisfies all - that makes all feel that the PNC's composition has an objective basis?

Unfortunately, due to the exceptional circumstances in which the Palestinian people live, we cannot hold elections. Had we had that opportunity, we would have reached a solution to this problem, even if only a partial one. How can we then, in the light of this reality, solve the issue?

During the dialogue that preceded the PNC's unifying session and during the session itself, discussion focused on the view that it was necessary to define the PNC membership in accordance with the percentage of representation allotted to the independents, the (resistance) organizations, the unions, etc... What is required is to determine the basis on which these percentages are decided...

This problem can only be resolved through the principle of proportional representation, in order to form a

democratic PNC in which everybody adheres completely to the resolutions adopted... What are the standards for determining the representation of each organization?

As an example, we in the PFLP feel that we are wronged and should be better represented. Outlining a set of standards would make it possible to know what the PFLP represents. The number of seats allotted to the PFLP in the PNC could be determined on that basis. This would be applied to all organizations, including Fatah, that we think is overrepresented.

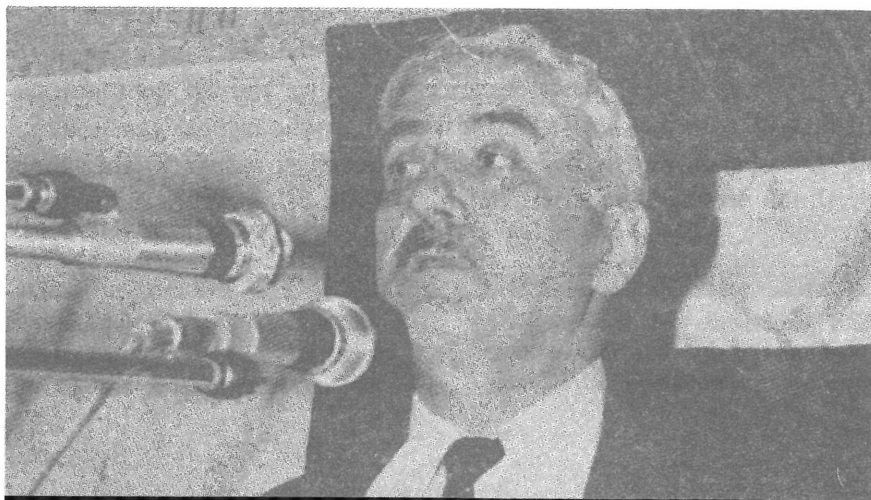
... I therefore introduce a proposition which I hope will be discussed, calling for the Executive Committee, in cooperation with the PNC president to begin preparing to evaluate the formation of the next PNC, at least by January. This means determining the number of representatives for independents, (resistance) organizations and mass unions, and the percentage of each (resistance) organization. In this way, by next March, we would have a list of names, and the PNC could convene in April.

TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPT OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL

Given the resolutions adopted at the April PNC concerning the tasks and powers of the Central Council, this council should embark on a new experience. As I understand the resolutions, the tasks of the Central Council are as follows: (1) insuring the Executive Committee's adherence to the PNC's resolutions and holding it accountable; (2) evaluating the Executive Committee's activities between PNC sessions; and (3) issuing guidelines for the Executive Committee's work. In the light of this, our task is to confirm the new concept of this institution...

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

While I express the PFLP's satisfaction with the regularity of the Executive Committee's meetings so far, I criticize the delay of the Executive Committee in agreeing on a set of internal regulations for itself... (this has since been drafted -editor's note). I also hope that the Executive Committee completes preparation of the various sets of internal regulations which outline the tasks and powers of each department of the PLO.



Concerning this, I would like to remind the Executive Committee of the latest PNC's resolution calling for reevaluating the formation of the PLO's committees, offices and departments, on the basis of front relations.

The last point I will address concerns the PNC's recommendation for the unions to study the issue of proportional representation and present the results of their study to the Executive Committee. Taking a decision on this issue would resolve the wrong forms of competition (between the different organizations), which sometimes cripple the unions' work...

JUDGING THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S WORK

On the political level... the importance of this meeting undoubtedly stems from its being a forum for evaluating the Executive Committee's work. This is particularly true since gains can only be made by overseeing and holding accountable... The criterion for judgement in the PLO is the degree of adherence to the PNC's resolutions. We expended great efforts to arrive at these resolutions... To this end, I would like to address three topics on the political level...

RELATIONS WITH EGYPT

The first is how the Executive Committee implemented the PNC's resolution concerning relations with Egypt. I will discuss this issues from three angles... The first angle is the text of the resolution. The second is what we have gained and lost with these relations. The third is connecting this issue with our vision of the future. Through these three angles, the position of the PFLP will be understood. Those who attended the comprehensive dialogue and the PNC's unifying session know the nature of the various opinions on this issue, as well as the difficulties we faced in reaching a common understanding. The importance of this issue requires that all of us adhere completely to the text of the resolution. If I am an Executive Committee member, it is my duty to rely on the text which was adopted unanimously, not on my own convictions...

The text states that relations with Egypt should be based on the resolutions of the consecutive sessions of the PNC, the 16th session in particular.

This point created sharp arguments threatening the success of the session. The text also states that Palestinian-Egyptian relations should be based on the resolutions of the Arab summits related to the issue. We all know that the most important summit dealing with this issue was the Baghdad Summit in 1978. The resolutions adopted there concerning relations with Egypt were clear to all.

Were our relations with Egypt based on this text? The period following the PNC witnessed extensive and high-level contacts with the Egyptian regime. Brother Hani Al Hassan visited Cairo several times. Brother Arafat met twice with President Husni Mubarak. Father Elias Khouri (EC member) visited Cairo once and declared that his visit was on behalf of the PLO. I wonder, if you have an opinion pertinent to this issue like mine, would you accept what has happened?

I am not only discussing whether or not there was adherence to the text... If we don't take a serious stand on this issue, given that a major Arab country has official relations with the Zionist state, what can we expect from friendly nations concerning relations with 'Israel'?

Let us put the text aside, and discuss what we have lost and gained from our relations with the Egyptian regime. Then we can compare. Did we have definite assurances from the Egyptian regime that it would adopt the concept of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital? Or clear support to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people? Or confirming the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people? I don't think so. The greatest proof of this is the official Egyptian policies... The latest was Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismat Abdel Maguid's speech at the 42nd session of the UN General Assembly. He called for the formation of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, and mentioned the rights of the Palestinian people without specifying what these are. What Egyptian officials tell Hani Al Hassan behind closed doors is not important... What is important to us, what we judge by, is the declared policy of the Egyptian regime.

In contrast, what are the negative aspects of these relations? We can mention many - the negative effects on national unity... The weakening of the credibility of the PLO which decides

one thing, then acts differently, and the negative effects on our relations with forces that reject relations with such a regime.

Concerning the third angle, this subject can only be thoroughly understood by relating it to our future conception of the Palestinian revolution... Suppose the international conference were to be convened tomorrow, and that the PLO was represented. Arguments might continue for ten years without Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, unless there was a shift in the balance of forces in favor of the Palestinian and Arab forces. Consequently, we should develop a conception about the near future and the way to affect the balance of forces, to shift it to our advantage. In addition to intensifying the struggle in occupied Palestine, we should safeguard our second operational base in Lebanon. This requires consolidating the Palestinian-Lebanese nationalist alliance and dealing patiently with the issue of the PLO's relations with Syria.

This conception of the future should guide our tactical stands. Although we are confronted with Syria's stand concerning the Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian national alliance, we should still shoulder responsibility for outlining the correct national position on this alliance... Any comrade or brother who rejects my argument could give another view, but should bear in mind that this is a matter which concerns the revolution not only for a month or a year, but in the long run.

Reviewing the political situation, I deduce that safeguarding our second operational base in Lebanon requires pursuing a specific political line towards Syria, whether there is immediate success or not... The Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian nationalist alliance is a response to an objective need, and this need should be clear to all...

CONTACTS TO ISRAELIS

Since the PNC in April, there have been several contacts between prominent Palestinians and Zionist Israelis. In addition, there were news reports that at the NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held in Geneva in September, PLO Chairman Arafat gave a letter to Charlie Biton (MK of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality) to be forwarded to the Israeli government. Subsequently, the PLO ►

Executive Committee made the following statement on the matter: «The Executive Committee reviewed the NGO meeting... (and) examined the press distortion attempts of hostile press circles aimed at degrading the important results of this great international conference...» (editor's note).

The second topic is the contacts with Israeli officials. There are two points: The first is the message which Charlie Biton said that he delivered to the Israeli government from the chairman of the PLO Executive Committee. I was deeply concerned about this... When I read the Executive Committee statement about it, I found that the controversy wasn't resolved... We are in a very sensitive stage that requires confronting every issue that disturbs Palestinian national unity or serves to discredit the Palestinian people's leading institutions. Therefore, I suggest that the final Central Council statement include a clear and specific denial of this matter.

The second point concerns contacts in occupied Palestine with Israeli of-

ficials (the meeting between Amirav of Shamir's Herut Party and Palestinian intellectuals, Sari Nusseibeh and Faisal Husseini). I suggest that a condemnation of such contacts be issued. The standard of patriotism for every Palestinian is determined by the extent of this person's adherence to the PLO and its national program which rejects such contacts and all forms of unilateral solutions with the Zionist enemy.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The third and final topic is the international conference. The PFLP considers the April PNC's resolution on this issue as being correct and clear. We demand exact adherence to it... There are several ways for the imperialist-Zionist enemy to falsify the concept of the international conference. This requires that we confront all attempts to divert the conference from its genuine conception.

For example, the PNC resolutions don't mention a joint Arab delegation.

Why should we then talk about this (as some Palestinian officials have done)? Some might say we should follow the developments, but who is to be included in this joint delegation? Surely it will include some countries that don't want to guarantee the Palestinian people's rights... In addition, the conference is not close at hand. Why are concessions being given in advance?

What are our existing weapons that we should hold on to, in order to change the balance of forces and enable the convention of a just international conference? Our most important weapon is consolidating national unity. The PLO's credibility should be restored; a clear political line should be followed; and our military effectiveness should be escalated.

Finally, I would like to express my satisfaction with the way the Executive Committee has dealt with the issues of Lebanon and the occupied territories... I would also like to stress that my speech was solely aimed at achieving progress and continuing this advance until victory. ●

Final Statement

Translation of WFAA communique issued on October 8, 1987, Tunis.

On October 5-7th, the PLO's Central Council convened in Tunisia, for its first session after the 18th PNC, held in April. The session was chaired by PNC President Abdul Hamid Al Sayih, and attended by PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, PFLP General Secretary George Habash and members of the PLO Executive Committee.

As the session began, the Central Council, on behalf of the Palestinian masses, expressed deep appreciation to the Palestinian forces, leaders and masses who are steadfast in the camps and in occupied Palestine, and who struggled for the success of the national dialogue that culminated in the 18th PNC - the session of national unity, that constituted a major turning point in the history of the contemporary Palestinian revolution.

The first session of the Central Council, with its new composition, was a national occasion for the Palestinian nationalist forces, organizations and personalities, to meet and interact in a democratic atmosphere, showing deep political maturity, a high sense of responsibility and national commitment. This enabled the council to conduct a thorough and responsible study of the state of the PLO on the political, military and organizational levels, and a complete survey of the conditions of the Palestinian people living in occupied Palestine, the camps in Lebanon, the Arab host countries and in communities the world over.

The Central Council heard the political report delivered by

PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat. With analysis and details, this report described the Palestinian situation since the PNC's 18th session that embodied our people's determination to continue the struggle, confront all challenges and adhere to the PLO, on the road to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state. In view of this report and the discussion of the council members, the council declared the following:

1. OCCUPIED PALESTINE

The Central Council reviewed the racist Zionist practices against our people - repression, terror, deportations, arrests, expropriating land, demolishing homes, stealing water, building settlements and Judaizing holy sites. In addition, the council noted the Zionist settlers' calls for expelling our people from their homeland.

The Central Council studied the schemes the Zionist enemy continues to impose on our masses through the joint administration plan, aiming at creating alternatives to the PLO. The council called upon the international bodies to shoulder their responsibility in order to put an end to the occupation and its practices, which violate international law and basic human rights which have been affirmed by the UN.

The Central Council reaffirmed the necessity of drawing up a comprehensive program for confronting the Zionist policy, and raising this issue at the upcoming Arab summit and in the international organizations and institutions. The council ex-

pressed respect and appreciation of the masses' continuous steadfastness in the face of the Israeli enemy, and hailed the continuous mass uprisings and the steadfastness of our heroes in the occupation authorities' prisons.

The Central Council called for drawing up practical plans to consolidate our masses' steadfastness, the unity of their organizations and institutions, and the interaction between (the struggle) inside and outside the occupied land. The council highly evaluated the formation of the National Work Committee for the Occupied Land.

2. PALESTINIAN CAMPS IN LEBANON

The Central Committee reviewed the painful, inhuman reality suffered by the Palestinian camps while confronting aggression and the siege that has been imposed for three years. The council called upon Arab and international bodies to focus their efforts on putting an end to the aggression and lifting the siege immediately, so that our people can maintain their homes, hospitals and schools, and have a free, respectable life.

The Central Council focused on the September 11th agreement signed in Sidon (between the Palestinians and the Lebanese Front for Unity and Liberation). The council reconfirmed the necessity of implementing this agreement according to the adopted text. The council considers this agreement as a new basis for Lebanese-Palestinian relations and the beginning of a new stage of brotherhood and love, and directing all efforts and guns against the Zionist occupation in South Lebanon.

The Central Council holds in high esteem the Executive Committee's decision to form the Palestinian National Work Leadership in Lebanon, including all the Palestinian forces and organizations, and the Military Work leadership. The council considered these two bodies as a living manifestation of the strength of Palestinian national unity that was crystallized in the 18th PNC session.

3. THE POLITICAL SITUATION

A. THE EXTRAORDINARY ARAB SUMMIT IN AMMAN

The Central Council welcomed the Arab foreign ministers' decision to convene an Arab summit in Amman in November, as an expression of urgent national necessity. This is especially true since our nation is suffering from division and secondary conflicts at a time when imperialist-Zionist aggression is escalating in order to attack the steadfast positions in our nation, one by one.

The Central Council confirmed that the restoration of Arab solidarity is one of the priorities of national action. The council also confirmed that the present deterioration in the Arab situation necessitates the restabilization of the nationalist stands that have been expressed in the consecutive Arab summits concerning the Palestinian question. These stands expressed firm national commitment to the Palestinian people, their organization (the PLO) and their inalienable national rights - the right to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state. The council called upon the Executive Committee to concentrate its efforts on achieving such restabilization.

B. IRAQ—IRAN WAR

The Central Council has been following with concern the dangerous deterioration in the Gulf region, due to the continuing Iraq-Iran war and the amassing of the US fleet. The council called on Iran to stop the war immediately and abide by Security Council resolution 598. The council called on Iraq to declare its willingness to resolve differences by peaceful means, in order for peace and amity to prevail, especially after Iraq has declared its acceptance of all peace initiatives, including the international resolution (598). The council believes that the continuation of this war only benefits the colonialist, imperialist and Zionist forces, while causing extreme harm to the Palestinian cause.

C. INTERNATIONAL PEACE CONFERENCE

The Central Council studied the initiatives, recommendations and international resolutions concerning an international peace conference on the Middle East. The council called on the Executive Committee to concentrate its efforts and contacts for the holding of a fully empowered conference as advocated by the UN, the non-aligned summit, the African summit, the Arab summit, the socialist countries, the EEC and all friendly countries.

The Central Council confirmed the necessity of unified Arab work to support the formula of an active international conference under UN auspices with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and all parties involved in the conflict, including the PLO, on an equal footing, in order to fulfill the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people - the right to return, self-determination and the establishment of an independent state on their national soil with Jerusalem as its capital.

The Central Council rejected the Israeli and US attempts to devoid the international conference of its essence, transforming it into an umbrella for bilateral deals.

4. THE PLO'S ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Central Council reviewed the Executive Committee's sincere efforts to implement the PNC resolutions on consolidating the PLO's relations with fraternal Arab countries. The council holds in high esteem these efforts to achieve Arab solidarity directed against imperialism and Zionism.

The Central Council condemned the US's continuous hostile positions against the PLO, the most recent of which was the closure of the PLO Information Office in Washington D.C. The council considered this to be only one of a chain of failed attempts to obscure the truth from the American public.

The Central Council saluted the principled positions of the friendly socialist countries, the non-aligned countries, the Islamic and African countries, and all liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The council sent congratulations and greetings to the Soviet Union on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the great October Revolution. At the end of the session, the Central Council sent greetings to the president, government and people of Tunisia, thanking them for their hospitality.

Lebanon

Political Deadlock Fuels Economic Crisis

The crash of the Lebanese pound, a series of strikes, and the mass revolt against hunger in Beirut in late August, have brought the economic and class aspect of the Lebanese crisis to the fore.

In August alone, prices rose 43.6%, setting a new record in crisis-torn Lebanon. The prices of many basic consumer items were estimated to have risen by 300% since the first of the year. In the same space of time, the inflation rate reached 245%, also a record high, leading Lebanon's General Labor confederation to predict an annual inflation rate of 600-800%. The Lebanese pound, once the most stable currency in the Middle East, lost over 70% of its value, plunging as low as £290 to the dollar, as of August 27th.

There were other more graphic symptoms of the all-sided economic crisis. Prompted by the fuel shortage, lines began at bakeries and petrol stations before dawn, swelling into crowds and fistfights as people scuffled to obtain their daily needs. Even in villages, merchants wouldn't open their shops until afternoon when the closing price of the Lebanese pound was posted. Increasingly, children were seen picking for food in piles of garbage.

With their buying power drastically eroded, Lebanese citizens began signalling their discontent. In July, there was a three-day general strike to protest the declining standard of living. In mid-August, both the state radio and television stopped broadcasting as employees went on strike. There were strikes by municipal workers in Tripoli, Mina and Ghbeiri, and in several private concerns. Then, on August 27th and 28th, people poured into the streets amid reports of pending abolishment of state subsidies on gasoline. In West Beirut, drivers stopped their services (collective taxis, the most common form of public transport in the city), fearing their means of making a living in jeopardy. Stalled services blocked main roads, as people marched on Hamra, the affluent business and shopping district. Hundreds tried to storm the Central Bank, targeting its failure to protect the Lebanese pound. The Lebanese Army fired in the air, at-

tempting to disperse the crowds. Protests spread all over the city, including the eastern sector, and continued through the next day. Burning tires blocked the road to the airport. Foreign exchange booths, supermarkets and luxury shops were overrun. While establishment figures decried the 'aimless violence', the targets singled out by the masses attest to their awareness of the sources of their economic woes - state policy (or lack of same), uncontrolled private enterprise and speculation - three elements which are closely interwoven in the Lebanese system.

HUMAN COSTS

Prices have continued to rise, propelled upward by the lifting of state subsidies on two vital commodities, gasoline and bread, in September and October respectively. Meanwhile, the pound continued its downward plunge, hitting 500 to the dollar on October 30th. The human costs of the collapse and concurrent dollarization of the Lebanese economy are almost incalculable. According to the Consumer's Protection Department (affiliated to the Economy Ministry), the value of Lebanon's minimum monthly wage of £4,300 has dropped from \$50 in January to \$16 in August. On October 5th the acting finance minister, Joseph Hashem (also Phalangist Party member), announced a decision to double the minimum wage, the first such raise in over a year. From that day to the next, the pound's value fell by over \$10, hitting a new record low (\$306). As one Beirut comment, «Yesterday, the government announced salary increases, today speculators snatch it all back by devaluating the pound.» Little over a week later, the same 'generous' minister lifted subsidies on bread, upping the price 47% overnight.

While the poor have always suffered from Lebanon's finance-oriented,

dependent capitalist system, the current crisis is hitting well into the middle class. A study published by the National Union Federation on October 3rd, showed that the minimum monthly expenses of an average family of five, excluding clothes, rent and school fees, had risen from £14,179 in October 1976, to £32,718. The report registered the average salary as £10,000, raising the simple question as to how a breadwinner feeds the family, even after the subsequent wage hike. There is moreover the severe problems of the unemployed whose ranks are swelling. As of two years ago, it was estimated that 40% of the population had no work. This number is constantly growing with company closures due to the economic crisis.

The answer is simply that not all families can feed their children. UNICEF has estimated that about 1,000 children die of infection and malnutrition every year in Lebanon. According to Richard Reid, UNICEF director for the Middle East and North Africa, indications of rising infant mortality and malnutrition surfaced in Lebanon early this year. He estimates that in the recent period, more children may have died from lack of food than from violence. In July, Lebanon's Islamic Orphanage reported that it had received a record number of abandoned infants (17) in the three preceding months, some of them found in piles of garbage, on roadsides or vacant lots.

Naturally, some are profiting from the decline in the working masses' standard of living. According to the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lebanon's exports may rise more than 50% in dollar terms this year, following the collapse of the pound. Since production has decreased rather than increased, this can only mean that manufacturers and exporters are profiting from cheaper local labor due to the pound's reduced dollar value. (Arab countries are now the main importers of Lebanese goods, but the US has recently emerged as a new market.)

VICIOUS CIRCLE OR STRUCTURAL CRISIS?

The Lebanese economic crisis appears as an irresolvable vicious circle, for each of its indices is interlocked with a cluster of other factors. The fuel crisis provides one example of how a

number of factors converge to the detriment of the overall economy and the citizens' welfare. In mid-September, Lebanon was running short of fuel. With the Central Bank's foreign currency reserves at only \$200 million and the state drowning in a 130 billion pound deficit (for 1986), the Minister for Economy, Industry, Commerce and Oil, Victor Kasir, ended state subsidies on gasoline, saying the government couldn't afford them. The black market had also played a role: Gasoline was being sold for as much as four times the official price.

In any case, gasoline prices rose by 133%, putting new burdens on the consumer, but severe rationing continued in West Beirut, allegedly due to distribution problems, etc. It is typical that after an extended period of government inaction, when right-wing ministers finally did something, it was against the interests of the ordinary citizens. Acting Finance Minister Hashem, who authorized the Central Bank credit to import more gasoline after the subsidy lift, claimed that this would save the treasury £45 million annually, to be used for social benefits. However, in the light of past experience of state neglect, few put their hopes on this, especially since it is a piecemeal measure, not part of an overall

recovery plan. In fact, public services have been rapidly receding in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

Shortage of other fuel continued as Hashem withheld import authorization, pushing for a new subsidy cancellation. In West Beirut, bakeries were closing due to fuel and flour shortage, and severe electricity rationing. Lebanon's largest hospital, the American University Hospital in Beirut, threatened closure in late September, citing lack of fuel to run its generators to supply electricity, its fuel consumption having been doubled to make up for the prolonged power cuts.

Indeed, the complexity of the crisis is a convenience for Lebanon's magnates who would like to hide that it is their economic orientation, and the dollar mafia they have spawned, that are pushing the population to the starvation point. The interests of the big bourgeoisie lie in the continuation of Lebanon's essential economic role as financial broker between the imperialist countries and the oil-rich Gulf states. The corollaries of this role are a weak industrial sector; historical neglect of agriculture, especially in the South; minimal state intervention in the economy (even when the state is functioning), consecrated in bank secrecy laws which make it almost impossible

to control the monetary market; and a host of other factors in which the current crisis is rooted.

It is not surprising that the destruction of over a decade of civil war and Israeli aggression have brought this fragile system nearly to a halt. In 1986, Lebanon's gross national product had dropped to almost half what it was in 1974. Today, Lebanon is importing about 80% of its daily needs, and six times more than it exports, making it totally vulnerable to price rises in the exporting countries. The dependent nature of the country's service-oriented, capitalist system has made it doubly vulnerable to external factors, such as the relative recession in the Gulf countries, which reduced capital inflow and remittances to Lebanon. There is now outright capital outflow with companies pulling out and specialized manpower emigrating.

Still, for all its faults, the Lebanese economy initially seemed remarkably able to survive the first decade of civil war and even the 1982 Israeli invasion and occupation. Until 1985, the pound remained relatively stable. This could be explained away by saying that it simply took a certain time for the multiple factors of the crisis to mature. However, it is also enlightening to look at the political realities which are close-

Beirut's children, accustomed to playing in ruins, now face starvation.



ly related to the structural nature of the economic crisis.

THE POLITICAL CONNECTION

In July, the Lebanese Communist Party issued a statement entitled «The Crisis of the Pound is the Result of the Political Crisis of the Sectarian Regime, the Free Enterprise System and Subordination to Imperialism.» The statement refers back to the events of January 1986, when Samir Geagea and Amin Gemayel staged a coup in the fascist ranks, whereby Geagea replaced Elie Hobeika as commander of the Lebanese Forces. This followed Hobeika's signing of the tripartite agreement with Walid Jumblatt and Nabih Berri, calling for abolishing political sectarianism, upholding Lebanon's unity and liberating all its territory from Israeli occupation, and maintaining special relations with Syria. Overnight, the coup scuttled the most serious attempt at national reconciliation. The pound, which had traded at 19 to the dollar, plunged along with the hopes for stability, falling to 122 to the dollar in less than a year and a half.

The assassination of Prime Minister Rashid Karami on June 1st this year was the next major blow to hopes for a political solution. In the six ensuing weeks, the value of the US dollar rose 55% as against the Lebanese pound, hitting 200 to \$1, in contrast to an increase of less than 40% in the first five months of the year. It is widely believed that fascist forces in the army had a hand in the assassination.

Amin Gemayel's regime and the fascist forces stand doubly responsible for the people's impoverishment. Their political intransigence, aimed at protecting the privileges of the Maronite bourgeoisie in particular, has blocked the functioning of the national unity government. The Lebanese Forces' proposal for a new cabinet to solve the economic crisis is really a call for replacing the nationalist ministers who are boycotting Amin Gemayel. Escalating the political crisis to the point of chaos would help the fascists pursue their partitionist plans.

In the shadow of the political deadlock and the regime's protection of



November 9th: West Beirut demonstrators carry coffin symbolizing the rulers.

the free enterprise system, the big bourgeoisie has capitalized on the pound's devaluation. General loss of confidence in the pound, and depositors' reversion to the dollar and other foreign currency, has further aggravated the situation: The Central Bank's possibility for intervening in the money market is significantly narrowed; only 15% of deposits in Lebanon's banks are now in pounds; and prices are often posted in dollars - all factors which fuel more speculation and inflation.

It seems unlikely that any sector of the Lebanese establishment, whatever their political or confessional affiliation, can or will find viable solutions to the crisis. The proposals of some politically moderate bourgeois sectors for selling part of Lebanon's gold reserves, would only be a step towards total breakdown, in the view of the Lebanese Communist Party.

The only hope seems to come from the possibility of a popular awakening that could cut through the barriers to class solidarity, that have been erected by the sectarian system. In fact, people on both sides of the political divide are suffering. Social action could add a new dimension to the struggle in Lebanon, if organized on the basis of democratic principles and clear awareness of the roots of the crisis.

MASS FIGHTBACK

Popular action to redress economic grievances has, in fact, reached an unprecedented level in the recent period. Following the mass uprising in late August, the trade unions have taken initiative to a series of actions protesting the regime's policy of starva-

tion, and threatening to begin an open-ended strike in November if no measures for improvement are forthcoming. Some have called for this strike to last until bringing down Gemayel's regime. On September 4th and 22nd, there were strikes. Labor conferences were held, focusing on basic social demands that have been on the agenda since the early seventies - the right to free medical care, housing and education, as well as frequent wage increases, indexed to match inflation.

On October 15th, there were demonstrations in all major towns throughout the country, protesting the lifting of subsidies on bread (which pushed its price up 43%). Demonstrators stressed the failure of all hegemonic and sectarian projects, and the state's failure to resolve the socioeconomic crisis. Slogans were raised for overcoming sectarian barriers and unifying ranks to stop the economic collapse. There were demands for cancelling the bank secrecy laws and limiting the price of foreign currency, in order to protect the pound.

In Beirut, the demonstration beginning in the eastern sector joined the demonstration originating in the western sector at the so-called green line, site of Mansour Palace, the parliament building. Antoine Beshara of the General Labor Confederation, who led the demonstrators from East Beirut, made a speech condemning the mafia, state policy and the latter's empty promises. He pledged that this demonstration was a final warning of the impending open strike. The other main speaker was Elias Haber of the National Union Federation, who led the demonstrators from the West, stressed that working class unity could form the basis for the struggle for consecrating Lebanon's unity and attaining social justice. He pledged that the trade unions would not retreat in their struggle.

On October 20th, public and private schools closed throughout Lebanon, as 50,000 teachers went on strike until the fulfillment of their demands for better wages, health benefits and job security. The strike continued into its second week, punctuated by demonstrations and sit-ins, after the parliament gave

consideration to only a fraction of the teachers' grievances. Then, on November 2nd, the teachers suspended the strike after reviewing the results of their meeting with the Interior Minister. They evaluated the strike as very positive in terms of the unity exhibited between public and private school teachers. Concerning their demands, they had received pledges for wage increases, payment of transportation costs, medical benefits and amendment of the regulations concerning dismissal. However, the teachers' statement called for vigilance as these were only promises. December 12th was set as the date for possible resumption of the strike, if concrete results were not forthcoming.

GENERAL STRIKE

Literally all of Lebanon ground to a halt on November 5th, in the long-heralded general strike. Though food shops began limited openings over the next few days, major economic institutions, including the country's international airport and harbor, remained closed for five days. The fifth day of the strike, 100,000 Lebanese converged for a three-hour demonstration in Beirut - the biggest anti-inflation manifestation ever. At the same time, there were large demonstrations in Sidon, Tripoli, Tyre and the Bekaa. Shouting «No to hunger, No to the war», people from East and West Beirut met at the city's divided center. West Beirut residents clambered over civil war embankments to join demonstrators on the other side.

The same evening, the General Labor Confederation suspended the strike on the grounds that the government had pledged to set up a committee to study ways of strengthening the Lebanese pound (which had most recently plunged to 700 to the dollar). While the suspension elicited some surprise since the strike had been intended to last longer, this reflected the realities of such struggle in the current Lebanese situation where there is no single power or body competent to fulfill the masses' demands. As a result of the General Labor Confederation's meetings with various officials, some things were agreed upon: a sliding wage index; monitoring of school fees by the Education Ministry so that these cannot be manipulated by school owners; implementation of the law for importing medicine and establishing a fund to insure reasonable prices for medicine; allocating £1.5 billion to the Housing Bank for loans to citizens; and the expansion of the joint transportation network. Obviously, while useful, these measures do not constitute a solution to the crisis. Efforts to stabilize the Lebanese pound can take a long time to implement even if agreed upon. Even this is doubtful, for real solutions would infringe on long-established traditions of laissez-faire and bank secrecy.

The progressive labor leader, Elias Haber, dealt with some of these problems while evaluating the general strike in an interview with *Al Nida* newspaper, November 15th: «The

desired results... were not achieved. We say that economic, social and political reform is needed, but to safeguard working class unity, we decided to suspend the strike. Controlling the currency is very important in the current situation, and it takes a long time to agree on means for control. As a union, we had to suspend and wait... like a warrior pausing to gather strength to continue the battle.» Haber pointed to the mass movement as the reserve force for further struggle if solutions to the social problems are obstructed. He added, «The unachieved currency control is closely linked to national dialogue and reconciliation without which no serious measures can be enacted.»

Haber explained that some forces within the trade union movement were aware that to really make an impact, the political ceiling of the struggle should be raised. This would lead to continuing the general strike until ousting the president and current government, and forming a transitional government, with the participation of the trade unions, to monitor the process of reform. However, other forces were afraid of the risks involved in continuing the strike; some were afraid of unleashing the masses' full capacities, or were subject to pressure from the political forces dominating certain areas. This prevented the «continuation of the strike which could have changed things in a way that would have positively impacted on Lebanon's stability, unity and reform.» In view of the lack of consensus, the strike was suspended, until the upcoming 3rd National Union Conference which will outline the future actions of the labor movement.

Whether it is resumed or not, the importance of the general strike is the fact of its being the largest mass manifestation in Lebanon's post-independence history. As such, it accurately reflected the depth of the socio-economic crisis, bringing together, for the first time, people on both sides of the political and confessional divide. It stands as a milestone to be carefully evaluated by the progressive forces in planning any future popular action.

dateline: November 20th.

August demonstration at the Central Bank: «We want to eat, we want to live.»



The Arab Summit

Although the emergency Arab summit held in Amman, November 8-11th, did not literally adopt the entire program of the reactionary regimes, its outcome signals preparations for a new phase of Camp David. This was most obvious in the decision to let Arab states resume relations with the Egyptian regime.

For the first time since 1982, all 21 members of the Arab League sent representatives to an Arab summit. For the first time whatsoever, the sumiteers made no pretense that the main concern was the Arab-Israeli conflict, much less its core, the Palestinian question. The latter was only put on the agenda after concerted protest by the PLO, backed by Syria, Libya, Algeria, Iraq and Democratic Yemen.

Instead, one decade after Sadat's historical trip to occupied Jerusalem, a major concession was offered to the Camp David model of political settlement, which relegated the Palestinian cause to the sidelines in favor of a US-sponsored Egyptian-Israeli deal. Deciding that «diplomatic relations between any Arab League member state and the Arab Republic of Egypt is a sovereign matter to be decided by each state in accordance with its constitution and laws,» the summit lifted the boycott on the Egyptian regime, which had been imposed by the 1979 Baghdad Summit. That Egypt was not outright readmitted to the Arab League was only due to the adamant objections of Syria and Libya.

The summit, which the Jordanian hosts proudly trumpeted as an «extraordinary» one, was held in the name of Arab solidarity which the final declaration termed «the prime concern of the Arab leaders.» There is no doubt of the need for Arab solidarity. It is a permanent requirement for resisting Zionist and imperialist aggression in the area. In the current situation, it is imperative for uniting around the campaign for an international peace conference on the Middle East, especially in order to thwart the US-Israeli attempts to distort the concept of such a conference. But the question remains as always: What kind of solidarity and to what aim? In this case, Arab officialdom united around opposition to Iran and support to Iraq in the Gulf war. The resolutions

adopted were the strongest yet Arab stand against Iran though, due to the objections of Syria, they did not reach the point of boycotting the Islamic Republic, as Saudi Arabia and others had originally pushed for. Most seriously, in expressing «support to Kuwait in all the measures it adopted to protect its territories and water...» the summit's final declaration tacitly legitimized the US and NATO military presence in the Gulf.

BOWING TO PRESSURE

True, the resolutions of the Arab summits of the past decade have been marked by steady decline, as compared to earlier ones. Even in this context, however, the resolutions of this summit have brought the stands of Arab officialdom to an all-time low. The kings, princes and presidents who convened in Amman, aimed at arriving at a unified Arab stand on the Iran-Iraq war, and means for making Iran respect the international consensus by accepting UN Security Council resolution 598. In the process, they adopted several dangerous resolutions, especially the one on Egypt, which gives tacit approval of the Camp David trend and the policies of bilateral deals as advocated by Washington and Tel Aviv.

The summit prepared the way for a new era wherein the Egyptian regime will return to its leading position in the Arab arena, but still tied by the strings of Camp David. The record quickness with which Arab regimes restored diplomatic relations strengthens the Egyptian regime's political role and its efforts to advance the US-sponsored settlement process. In less than a week, nine Arab states restored relations with Cairo (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Morocco, Iraq, North Yemen, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Mauritania). Added to the three that never broke relations (Oman, Somalia and Sudan), and the two that have restored relations in the interim (Jordan

in 1984 and Djibouti in 1986), this gives a clear majority of Arab League members. The trend is obviously for restoring Egypt to the Arab League at the upcoming ordinary summit, to be held in Riyadh at an unspecified date.

It is no wonder that both the US and Israeli governments voiced praise for the results of the Arab summit in Amman. The resolutions appeared as a direct response to US-Israeli pressure and the coordination that preceded the summit, especially Schultz's October trip where he met the Israeli leadership and then King Hussein in London. Though Jordan officially rejected the US proposal for joint US-Soviet sponsorship of direct talks between 'Israel' and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, the summit indicates that Arab reaction's differences with the US—Zionist settlement model are dwindling.

The summit did adopt support to «the convocation of an international peace conference, under the sponsorship of the United Nations and with the participation of all parties concerned, including the PLO, on equal footing, as well as the permanent members of the Security Council, regarding it as the only suitable means for a peaceful, just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict» (final statement). The summit resolutions moreover rejected any Arab country's involvement in a bilateral solution. However, in view of the upgrading of Egypt's status and the downgrading of the Palestinian question, this support to an international conference seems more a formality than a question of substance.

The Jordanian delegation worked hard to have removed the phrase on the PLO's being represented on an equal footing at the international conference. While this effort was not successful, the Jordanians united with other delegations to have the phrase «an independent Palestinian state» removed from the ritual reiteration of support to the Palestinian people's inalienable rights. In general, the Palestinian issue was dealt with separately from the Arab-Israeli conflict, despite their common roots, in an obvious prelude to separate deals. Having hosted such a 'successful' summit and in view of the summit's laxity on all questions of principle, King Hussein will be able to pursue with renewed vigor the policy of normalizing relations with the Zionist state, prior to signing an agreement.

WEAKNESS ON THE NATIONALIST SIDE

Lack of solidarity and cooperation in the Arab nationalist camp contributed to the summit's passing such resolutions. The weakness in the nationalist camp makes it incapable of deterring the US-Israeli offensive against all nationalist forces, and the reactionary regime's increasingly unified strategy and tactics. It is this weakness that paved the way for the increasing prominence and success of King Hussein and President Mubarak on the political scene.

If the present nationalist divisiveness continues, the Camp David regime can be expected to return to the Arab League at the next summit, where the resolutions will certainly be even more dangerous, as the official Arab policies degenerate further.

Unfortunately, all these negative signs have yet to prove to the rightist trend in the PLO leadership the dangers of the current political moves on the

Arab level, or the dangers of their own policies to the Palestinian cause. Instead of mobilizing the PLO to expose the reactionary nature of the summit resolutions, the Palestinian rightists joined the Arab reactionaries in lauding these resolutions and calling the summit «historic»!

It is more than ever essential that the Palestinian revolutionary democratic forces join efforts to secure united Palestinian political stands based on the resolutions of the April unification session of the PNC, particularly the resolution concerning relations with the Egyptian regime. Thus, the PLO would be equipped to play a central role in unifying the ranks of all the Arab nationalist and progressive forces and regimes, including the normalization of PLO-Syrian relations and of Palestinian-Lebanese-Syria relations- all necessary for confronting the upsurge in the imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary plans. ●

resolution for a mandatory arms embargo against Iran - an effort which is equally directed against the Soviet Union that wants to stick to the more even-handed resolution already adopted. With the September 20th Iranian attack on a Saudi ship and the next day on the British-flagged one, Mrs. Thatcher found her excuse for joining Reagan's new tactics, and closed the Iranian Military Procurement Office in London. In an extension of Iraq's economic war on Iran, the US slapped a ban on Iranian imports, after the rather embarrassing disclosure that in July, it was the world's third largest buyer of Iranian oil. France is also boycotting Iranian oil.

More dramatically, US forces staged three major military attacks on Iranian vessels and installations in September and October, while also firing on three fishing boats on November 3rd, killing one person. On September 21st, US forces captured the *Iran Ajr*, killing five Iranians in the process. On October 8th, US helicopters destroyed three Iranian speedboats. On October 19th, US destroyers demolished three Iranian oil platforms in international waters, after Iran, for the first time, attacked a US-flagged tanker in Kuwaiti waters and a US-owned ship flying the Liberian flag. Especially the US's last attack made a mockery of its claims to be protecting Gulf oil and waterways. In fact, the Reagan administration deliberately chose the military option as opposed to having Kuwait take the Iranian aggression to the UN, but Kuwait had to bear the brunt of Iranian retaliation - the October 22nd attack on a Kuwaiti oil terminal.

The US-Iranian confrontation can be expected to continue, as evidenced by then US Secretary of Defense Weinberger's statement that the US and its allies may send more forces to the Gulf, and stay until the war ends (*International Herald Tribune*, October 24-25, 1987). This was an obvious counter to the Soviet proposal for a UN force to replace foreign war fleets in the Gulf, and there is no sign of change in the US's Gulf policy after Weinberger's resignation.

TESTING GROUND

With the US invasion of the Gulf on the side of Arab reaction, the Iranian leadership eyed the chance to polish its anti-imperialist credentials. Yet with operations that more resemble agit- ►

The Gulf War

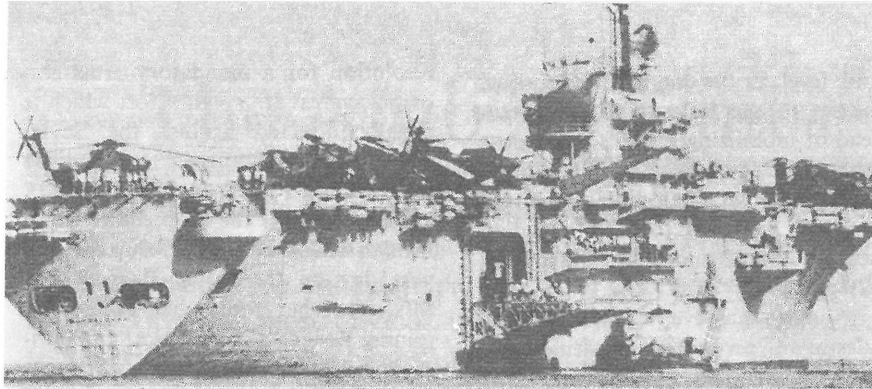
Direct US Intervention

The persistence of the Iraq-Iran war has given the Reagan Administration a golden opportunity to test its aggressive plans, forces and weapons in the Gulf. Inevitably, and as intended, the US's reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers led it into acts of war against Iran.

In July, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 598, calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gulf war; mutual Iraqi-Iranian withdrawal within their respective borders; and the establishment of an impartial body to allocate blame for the war's start. However, hostilities have continued apace. After some procrastination, the Iranian leadership signalled its de facto rejection of the resolution. Iraq in turn escalated its bombing attacks in late September. The tanker war has worsened, showing that the US reflagging operation was actually a declaration of expanded war. The Washington-based Center for Defense Information reported that in September, there were 31 attacks on shipping in the Gulf, 16 by Iraq and 15 by Iran. This compares to an average of seven such attacks a month throughout the war. Iraqi air attacks are generally

much more destructive than the Iranian attacks which commonly use speedboats.

The most salient feature of the recent stage of the war is direct Iranian-US confrontation. In the wake of the Irangate scandal, the Reagan Administration finally surmised that bolstering the Iraqi regime was the key to cementing US-dominated, reactionary control in the region. To this end, an aggressive campaign of disinformation and actual attacks has been mounted against the Islamic Republic, similar to the one previously launched against Libya. Brandishing proof that the Iranians were mining Gulf waters, after the September 21st seajacking of the *Iran Ajar* boat, the Reagan Administration embarked on a new attempt to sabotage the international consensus reached in July. It began pushing for a new Security Council



US Warship Guadalcanal in the Gulf

prop exercises than serious attempts to undermine US presence, the Islamic Republic's rhetoric against «the Great Satan» has a hollow ring. Actually, the Iranian leadership's intransigence and expansion of the war zone had three results that are much to the US's liking. One, it gave the excuse for upgraded US intervention. Two, it further inflamed chauvinism on both sides of the war front, allowing the reactionary regimes to reunite the Arab ranks (with few exceptions) against a secondary enemy and for closer military cooperation with the US. Third, it offered up its own people and resources as a testing ground for Reagan's air-land-sea battle plans.

The US attacks have served as much needed maneuvers with live ammunition to test US special forces and improve coordination between the different armed services. A week before the ambush of the *Iran Ajr*, US Navy Admiral Crowe visited the Gulf with a plan cleared by Reagan for discovering and foiling Iranian minelaying, and to follow up implementation of the 1986 defense reorganization act for shortening the chain of command, increasing the powers of theater commanders and putting the assets of all the services at their disposal - in short, making death and destruction more efficient.

The ambush itself involved Air Force spy planes and probably satellites, the AWACS stationed in Saudi Arabia and the Orion P-3s based in Oman, Navy ships and commandos (SEALs) and the elite Army helicopter unit called the Nightstalkers. This unit, officially called Task Force 160, was formed in 1981 and trained for storms and night flying, after the US's debacle in the desert trying to retrieve hostages from Iran in 1980. Task Force 160 participated in the invasion of Grenada, and like the SEALs, has been linked to the now supposedly disbanded Seaspray unit that joined the CIA's attacks on Nicaragua's coast.

The attack on the *Iran Ajr* was deemed the US's first military success in the wake of a string of fiascos in the Middle East, and 78% of the American public voiced approval - a pattern evidenced in relation to the ensuing attacks as well. Not only could Reagan give his forces battle - training and reassure local reactionaries; the administration is capitalizing on its war against Iran to restore its domestic prestige.

NATO AND ARAB COOPERATION

With over 40 warships, 15,000 sailors and a barge converted into a floating naval base in the central Gulf, the US hopes to recoup its active leadership of both the imperialist and Arab reactionary alliance. With its major NATO allies involved in coordinated action, at least in relation to minesweeping, the US is in an ideal position to demand more military coordination with the Gulf states, a goal it has sought since the 1979 demise of the Shah regime and the formation of the Rapid Deployment Forces. Some Gulf states, despite public denials, are indirectly taking part in the war on Iran, mobilizing their forces and pledging landing rights and other facilities to the US forces. The long-delayed and hidden military role of the Gulf Cooperation Council is becoming more pronounced. Most important, Egypt is reportedly sending pilots and military equipment to support Kuwait against Iran, a military precursor to the Arab Summit's decision that left Arab states free to restore relations with the Camp David regime. In return, the Saudis, together with the UAE and Kuwait, have worked out an economic aid package to help the Egyptian regime out of its economic problems, for which the US refuses to provide genuine aid.

Still, despite the apparent US success in the Gulf, Reagan has embarked on a risky venture. So far, the US Congress

has given the administration an easy time, delaying efforts to invoke the War Powers Act that requires the president to inform Congress within 48 hours of committing troops to an area of «imminent hostilities» and to withdraw them within 60 days unless Congress agrees to an extension. However, this will change if US forces incur casualties of any significant size.

In the longer run, the US public and Congress can also be disturbed about the economic costs of the war effort. For example, the destruction of the Iranian offshore oil installation, which the White House called a «measured and appropriate response», was an hour and a quarter attack in which Navy destroyers fired 1,065 shells at a cost of \$1,000 each. Ironically, this barely preceded the stock market crash which most observers have attributed to investors' unease at the size of the US budget and trade deficit - facts not unrelated to the Reagan Administration's flagrant military spending. As of now, the Reagan Administration has spent \$1.9 trillion in the biggest 'peacetime' budget ever for the country. A new rearmament plan would require spending another \$1.8 trillion by 1992, and the money simply may not be there (*Newsweek*, November 16th).

It cannot be ruled out that the Reagan Administration will blow up its war on Iran to justify increased military spending. Still, a host of domestic and international factors mitigate against the US involving itself in an all-out war. The Reagan Administration's tilt towards Iraq does not extend to the point of insuring an Iraqi victory in the war. Rather it is negatively determined - to ward off the upheaval which an Iranian victory would almost certainly unleash, for this would threaten the pro-US, oil monarchies. The US continues to view the Gulf war as a way of weakening both Iraq and Iran, while simultaneously tightening its own military network in the region.

Exploiting the political contradictions that the US may face, if it continues its Gulf adventure, requires a mature assessment of reality and a consistent anti-imperialist stand. Unfortunately, neither of the Gulf war combatants have exhibited such qualities, thus condemning their own people and resources to continuing the vicious cycle of destruction.

dateline: November 20th.

Soviet — US Summit

On December 8th 1987, the Secretary-General of the CPSU Mikhail S. Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan signed in Washington a treaty eliminating medium-range and shorter-range nuclear missiles. Under the terms of the agreement, the United States will eliminate about 850 medium- and shorter-range missiles, and the Soviet Union will scrap about 1,750 missiles over all. Describing the event, Mr. Gorbachev said that December 8, 1987 was «a date that will be inscribed in history». (International Herald Tribune, Dec. 9, 1987)

The total number of these missiles to be eliminated over three years represents despite the large number, only 4% of the world nuclear arsenal. But the great importance of this treaty lies in the fact that it is the first treaty ever to eliminate an entire class of offensive nuclear arms. The treaty also represents a historical precedent that confirms the realistic possibility to eliminate nuclear arms and other arms of annihilation. Forty two years after the US dropped its first A-bomb on Hiroshima, initiating the nuclear arms race, the treaty now comes as a new hope for humanity to eliminate all classes of nuclear weapons, and as «The first step down the road leading to a nuclear-free world» as Mr. Gorbachev remarked. (IHT, Dec. 9, 1987).

Product of the New Thinking

This historical treaty represents the first outcome, on the international level, of the 3-year-old new political thinking in the Soviet Union. In contrast to the US's continuing in the SDI program, the Soviet Union has called for a halt to all programs aiming at developing and expanding nuclear arms, and to start negotiations to eliminate these arms. These peaceful orientations were materialized in the Soviet Union's unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing, which started in August 1985. Despite the Soviet Union's appeals for the US to join this moratorium, the US continued its nuclear testing, unmoved by the world-wide condemnation. And on January 15, 1986, the Soviet Union called for

the elimination of all nuclear arms and other arms of annihilation before the year 2000, in addition to banning the militarization of outer space. The US rejected this plan when it was discussed at the Gorbachev-Reagan summit in Reykjavik, held on October 11-12th, 1986.

In February 1987, the Soviet Union suggested having a treaty to eliminate all medium-range and shorter-range nuclear weapons in Europe, while discussions continue to prepare a treaty for reducing nuclear strategic arsenals.

The US acceptance of the Soviet Union's proposals concerning the medium- and shorter-range missiles, paved the way for the Soviet and US negotiators in Geneva last April to outline drafts for this treaty. On October 30, 1987, the Soviet Union's foreign minister, Edward Shevardnadze and US secretary of state, George Schultz, signed the draft of this treaty, opening the road for the Dec. 7 summit in Washington.

Several factors have forced the Reagan administration to take the first step down the road of eliminating nuclear weapons, what it had rejected for decades. The US ruling class realized the difficulties facing its dreams of becoming the dominant force in this world. The Soviet Union and the socialist countries have established a defensive force capable of deterring the US—Nato military forces. This was manifested in the final joint US—Soviet declaration, which emphasized that nuclear war should never break out and that in such a war there are no winners.

In addition, the heavy economic and financial burdens of the arms race affects not only the Soviet Union but the US as well. This is clearly seen in the economic crisis of the capitalist world in general and of the US in particular, manifested in the increased deficits of the US budget and trade balance and the stockmarket's crash.

The consistent peaceful Soviet initiatives have added another factor. These initiatives gained world-wide support and have embarrassed the US «peaceful» rhetoric. And finally, Ronald Reagan is in his last year as the

president of the US, had failed for the past 7 years to strike a success in his foreign policies. And aspiring to win the Nobel peace prize, Reagan responded positively to Gorbachev's proposals concerning medium-range and shorter-range missiles.

Regional Conflicts

The subjects discussed at the summit included, in addition to the nuclear arms issue, the regional conflicts and the human rights issues. But the two sides have failed to score a success in neither the regional conflicts issue or the issue of human rights. This was due to the US' continued stubborn stand which views the solution to these conflicts in terms of US interests and the interests of its allies.

Concerning the Middle East conflict, the US attempted to sidestep this issue, concentrating instead on the Afghanistan and Gulf war conflicts. The Soviet Union reconfirmed its position concerning the Middle East conflict, and renewed its call for the convening of an international peace conference with the participation of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and all concerned parties including the PLO on equal footing as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In his press conference in Washington before leaving the US, Gorbachev indicated that he had asked the US President to rethink the stand of the Reagan administration concerning the international conference. But this call was rejected by the Reagan administration.

Undoubtedly, the reason behind the absence of the Middle East conflict on the agenda of the regional conflicts is due to the Arab regimes' positions and particularly to the results of the Amman summit which considered the Middle East conflict a second priority to the Gulf war problem.

As for the other regional conflicts, the US rejected the Soviet proposal to form a UN naval force to guarantee the freedom of navigation in the Gulf. And the US administration rejected as well a halt to its military and financial support to the counterrevolutionaries in Afghanistan, despite the Soviet Union's declared readiness to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan. ●

The Israeli Role in the Middle East

Regional CIA Station

This is a continuation of the study printed in previous issues of *Democratic Palestine* on the role played by 'Israel' in the region, based on inciting war and developing nuclear weaponry. In this issue, we deal with Zionism's alliances and covert activities. These two fields are almost synonymous for the Zionist state, since its own aggressiveness has precluded normal relations with surrounding countries. Rather, in its efforts to secure and expand its artificial existence, 'Israel' has turned itself into the CIA's extended arm.

To secure the occupation of Palestine and defeat the Arab national movement, the first Israeli prime minister, Ben-Gurion, launched the periphery orientation to forge relations with non-Arab states on the perimeters of the Arab world, especially Iran, Turkey and Ethiopia, all under autocratic rule at the time. Parallel to this were Zionist efforts to manipulate religious or ethnic minorities in the Arab countries - Christians in Lebanon, Kurds in Iraq, etc. This second aspect was an extension of the original Zionist policy of singling out Arab Jews for immigration to 'Israel' or engagement in subversion in their homelands. This policy was carried out by covert means from the start, as when the Mossad planted bombs in Baghdad to scare Iraqi Jews into immigrating. Another example was when Zionist agents (Egyptian Jews) planted bombs in Egypt in the 1950s. Though this led to a scandal, forcing Lavon, the defense minister, to resign, 'Israel' this year honored the spies who carried out the sabotage. Speaking to surviving members of the team and their families, Defense Minister Rabin said, «The great (intelligence) effort during the wars and between the wars, including your efforts, brought us in the end to peace with Egypt,» showing that covert sabotage activities are indeed a cornerstone of the Zionist state's foreign policy (*Monday Morning*, October 5-11, 1987).

By accentuating religious and ethnic differences, the Zionists aimed to acquire justification for their own sectarian state, while countering the secular, progressive tendency in the Arab liberation movement, ideologically and in the battlefield. This article focuses on the Zionists' two major success stories in forging regional alliances. Typically, these involved relations with ultrareactionary forces: the Shah of Iran and the Lebanese fascists. The first paved the way for the current Iran/contragate scandal, while the second culminated in the 1982 Israeli invasion and continuing occupation in Lebanon.

In connection with Irangate, an Israeli foreign ministry official complained that his country had become «a sort of second CIA available for dirty missions when the White House prefers not to go through the regular channels» (*International Herald Tribune*, June 1, 1987). Yet this is a role which the Zionist state has deliberately created for itself, not least via its policy towards Iran and Lebanon. Its regional role in turn laid the basis for its international role as arms supplier and military trainer for reactionary forces and regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Israeli radio reporter Haim Hecht wrote the following in *Monitin*, April 1983, about the Israeli plans for installing Phalangist Bashir Gemayel as president of Lebanon: «Mossad genuinely believed... that the political system used by the Shah of Iran, Heile Selassie of Ethiopia and General Delimi of

Morocco could work and enable Israel to control Lebanon... By the summer of 1981, Mossad's view had become that of the government and this had to end with the war in Lebanon» (quoted in *Al Fajr*, July 15, 1983).

Indeed the link between 'Israel' the occupier, the regional CIA and the international arms merchant is even reflected on the level of personnel. In the mid-70s, Brigadier General Benjamin Ben-Eliezar was military commander of the occupied West Bank, as well as the top liaison officer to the Phalangists. He had spent the years 1970-73 in Singapore, training its army. Uri Lubrani, one time Israeli representative in Uganda, Ethiopia and longest in the Shah's Iran, where he forged the Mossad-Savak connection, was appointed coordinator of affairs in South Lebanon after the 1982 Israeli occupation. David Kimche, former Mossad agent, built his foreign ministry career on relations with Black Africa, where the military aspects predominate in Israeli aid. He was also one of the architects of the Mossad's Lebanon policy and negotiated the ill-fated May 17, 1983 Israeli-Lebanese treaty. Kimche has gained recent notoriety as a key figure in the Israeli part of the Iran/contragate affair and was recalled to 'Israel' to avoid interrogation in the US.

ZIONIST—PHALANGIST RELATIONS

Israeli Minister of Science Yuval Neeman frankly expounded the Zionist attitude towards Lebanon on Israeli radio, February 22, 1985, saying, «Lebanon is not worth recognizing as a state.» Like his open advocacy of annexing the West Bank, Neeman emphasized that Lebanese territory «up to the Litani is essential for Israel's security» and that «all elements who don't like us» should be pushed out «like in 1967.» Defense Minister Rabin expressed equal contempt for the Lebanese when explaining the Israeli withdrawal from Tyre: «We didn't want too many of the Lebanese in the security zone» (Israeli radio, April 29, 1985). On this background, the Israeli leadership has espoused the «protection of the Christians» while in reality encouraging a fascist minority whose bloody drive for hegemony has been catastrophic for Lebanese as a whole, Christians and Moslems alike.

Zionist officials gained contact with right-wing Lebanese Maronites as far back as 1920. «In 1948, a Phalange Party contactman proposed to Zionist leaders that Israel help the party organize an insurrection to overthrow the pro-war regime in Lebanon» (Benny Morris, *Jerusalem Post*, July 1, 1983, based on a declassified Israeli foreign ministry file for 1948-51. By pro-war regime, Morris refers to the Lebanese government's opposition to the creation of the Zionist state).

In March of the same year, links were forged between Father Joseph Awad (the leading Phalangist proponent in the US) and American Zionist leaders, with the blessing of Israeli Foreign Minister Sharett. US Zionist organizations sponsored a trip by Awad to Lebanon and his campaign among Lebanese Christians for a non-belligerency pact with the Zionist state, in opposition to the Lebanese government's official stand. As a result of Awad's canvassing, Shulamith Schwartz of the American Zionist Council reported to Sharett in 1950 that «the great majority of Lebanese Americans are violently opposed to the present government of Lebanon» and urged contact to the Phalangists. Sharett in turn addressed a memorandum to Walter Eytan, director-general of the foreign ministry: «... this group is worthy of serious attention on our part. The picture drawn in this presentation - the taking out of Lebanon from the pan-Arab circle and its affiliation with Israel - is extremely heartwarming and opens the door to a far-reaching realignment in the whole structure of the Middle East...»

The Zionist state donated \$3,000 for bribes and vote-buying to the Phalangists' 1951 election campaign, but the results showed that expectations of the Phalangists' following were grossly inflated; they gained not one seat in the parliament. Subsequent Israeli plans recognized the need for military force to impose fascist hegemony and Zionist control of the coveted Litani River waters. One such plan was that of Moshe Dayan, which was recorded in Sharett's diary on May 16, 1954: «According to him (Dayan), the only thing that's necessary is to find an officer, even just a major. We should either win his heart or buy him with money, to make him agree to declare himself the saviour of the Maronite population. Then the Israeli army will enter Lebanon, will occupy the necessary territory, and will create a Christian regime which will ally itself with Israel. The territory from the Litani southward will be

totally annexed to Israel and everything will be all right» (quoted in Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism*, 1980).

Aside from historical interest, the above-mentioned facts serve mainly to belie the intertwined fascist-Zionist propaganda lies such as that the Lebanese Christians intrinsically need protecting and that 'Israel' has no interests in Lebanon except maintaining its own security. In fact, the Zionist-fascist alliance and partitionist, sectarian plans preceded the rise of the armed, organized Palestinian resistance by over a decade. In these years, Christian, especially Maronite, predominance in the Lebanese state and army, as established by French colonialism, was very much intact.

INFILTRATING LEBANON

In the seventies, the Israelis actively cultivated contacts with rightist Christians in South Lebanon, at a time when Rafael (Raful) Eitan, later chief of staff in the 1982 invasion, was head of the Israeli army's northern command. «General Avigdor Ben Gal, who took over the northern command from Raful, added momentum and sophistication to the project. It was he who created Major Haddad, not the man himself, but Haddad as the representative of a concept, namely Israeli intervention in Lebanon through maximum control. To this end, the same kitchen supplied the Christians in the north and Haddad's men in the south. Both sides received tanks and heavy artillery. Both were supplied with Israeli-made army fatigues... Mossad operated in the north and the army in the south of Lebanon. In September 1977, Major Haddad's men for the first time took part in an Israeli military operation, the conquest of Tel Sueifa» (H. Hecht, *Monitin*, April 1983).

From the beginning, the Israeli alliance with the Lebanese fascists merged with the CIA's activities. While the Zionists were cultivating their man in South Lebanon, the CIA was grooming the chieftain who would facilitate Zionist infiltration of the rest of Lebanon - Bashir Gemayel, son of Phalangist Party head Pierre Gemayel and commander of the fascist militias. According to Bob Woodward's just published book, *VEIL: The Secret Wars of the CIA: 1981-1987*, Bashir was recruited by the CIA when he came to work in a US law firm in the early 1970s; he remained on the CIA payroll for years.

The Zionists' military alliance with the fascists in the North was cemented during the 1975-76 Lebanese civil war. In line with the US's post-Vietnam. Kissinger-directed policy, 'Israel' joined the CIA and some Arab reactionary regimes in supporting the fascist militias, hoping they would eliminate the Palestinian revolution and its ally, the Lebanese National Movement. In early 1976, officials of the two main fascist parties, the Phalangists and the National Liberal Party (NLP) of Chamoun, met Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Allon. Weaponry, including tanks, flowed into the fascist-controlled harbor at Jounieh, as Defense Minister Peres assumed responsibility for the funding transferred by the Mossad. Bashir Gemayel and Dany Chamoun, commanders of the Phalange militias and the NLP's Tigers, respectively, visited the Zionist state. In Rabin's three-year term, \$150 million in military aid was given to the 'Christian' militias (Schiff, Ze'ev and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War*, 1984, p. 18). Zionist military advisors were present in the fascists' operations room directing the battle for Tel Al Zaatar, ►

Commemorating the martyrs of the Sabra-Shatila massre - victims of Zionist-fascist collaboration





Israeli-established border crossing from Lebanon

the Palestinian camp in Beirut, where the fascists enacted a massacre in August 1976, after a prolonged siege.

From 1977, with the advent of the Begin government, the Mossad solidified relations with Bashir Gemayel in particular, bolstering him to impose his command over all the fascist militias grouped in the Lebanese Forces. Militiamen began to travel to 'Israel' for training, and the fascists in the North were encouraged to send troops to fight alongside Saad Haddad when the Israeli army invaded Lebanon up to the Litani River in 1978. When the Israelis finally withdrew, Haddad's fascist forces were installed along the border strip, establishing a statelet that marked the first concrete step towards Lebanon's partition.

In 1978, when battles erupted between the fascist militias and the Syrian troops in Lebanon, Zionist aid to the fascists escalated again, in line with the Camp David plan for establishing imperialist-Zionist hegemony in the whole region. Israeli officers were sent to Lebanon to build up the Lebanese Forces' arsenals and fortifications; hundreds of Lebanese fascists headed to the Zionist state for training. Though the Israelis began to demand payment for their arms supply, \$2 million in weapons were delivered free (Schiff, p. 28).

Having earlier secured an Israeli promise for air support against the Syrian troops if need be, the Phalangists began provocations in East Lebanon (the Bekaa Valley). In April 1981, they began a major conflict, attempting to take over Zahle and forge a link between their areas in and around Beirut and the fascist-held areas in the South. The Israelis participated directly in the battle, shooting down two Syrian helicopters and building up to the missile crisis when the Zionist leadership tried to impose its will as to where the Syrians stationed their Soviet-built missiles not only in Lebanon, but in Syrian territory as well. These events had little to do with the concrete situation in Zahle, but were timed to match US Secretary of State Haig's efforts to forge a «strategic consensus», i.e., anti-Soviet pact in the region, wherein both 'Israel' and the Lebanese fascists wanted to figure prominently.

INVADING LEBANON

His status elevated by Zionist support, Bashir Gemayel announced his presidential candidacy in November 1981, having already been «informed by Sharon that he must quickly prepare for a full-scale war in which Israeli troops would take part» (Schiff, p. 46). Sharon himself led a large entourage of aides on a visit to Beirut in January 1982, to discuss war plans with the Phalangists for an operation that would extend to the southern outskirts of Beirut, i.e., the international airport. Final logistic coordination with the Phalangists was sorted out in Eitan's March visit to Beirut «accompanied this time by the commander of the air force, army specialists, and the commanders of a number of units slated to play key roles in the combat activity centering on the capital» (Schiff, p. 52).

What followed is well-known: the massive, murderous entry of the Israeli army into Lebanon, ushered across the border by Haddad's men, and into East Beirut by the Phalange; the savage bombing and prolonged siege of Beirut; the PLO's withdrawal; the 'election' of Bashir under the shadow of the occupiers' guns, and his assassination, whereafter the Israeli army escorted the Phalangists' elite troops led by their intelligence chief, Elie Hobeika, into Sabra and Shatila camps, to massacre Palestinians and poor Lebanese - women and children and elderly.

With the plan to bring Lebanon into the Camp David alliance having been focused on Bashir's presidency, the Israelis were somewhat at a loss in the aftermath. They distrusted his successor Amin Gemayel's propensity to find a *modus vivendi* with the rightist Moslem bourgeoisie and possibly Syria. In fact, the Israelis had another plan in their pocket, though it was never implemented: «a new presidential election would not be held, in its place would come the constitution of a military government under a prime minister appointed by Sarkis (the outgoing president) and granted emergency powers. Israel's candidate for the job was Johnny Abdo, chief of military intelligence and one of the Americans' most trusted friends in the Lebanese establishment... Over the

previous six years, Abdo had become President Sarkis' right-hand man... serving as the president's primary contact with Bashir and the American diplomats in Beirut...» (Schiff, p. 287).

When this scenario did not pan out, Israeli policy in Lebanon was reduced to what it really was anyway: occupation, blackmail and attempts at population transfer, to create a security belt for itself, steal the Litani water and eliminate as many Palestinians and patriotic Lebanese as possible. This was the background for the May 17, 1983 treaty which compromised Lebanon's sovereignty until being abrogated by the heroic struggle of Lebanese and Palestinian patriots, backed by Syria. In the absence of a treaty with the Lebanese state, 'Israel' has continued its relations with the fascist forces in the North and South, encouraging their aggression and steps toward partition, trying to again create a situation whereby it can move to control all Lebanon.

ZIONISM AND THE SHAH — TWIN IMPERIALIST OUTPOSTS

Before being demised by the Iranian people's uprising, the Zionist state's relations with Iran marked one of the most successful implementations of the US's 'Vietnamization' strategy. US hegemony in the Middle East was to be secured by two gendarme regimes - 'Israel' on the Mediterranean side and Iran in the Gulf. 'Israel' joined the US in supplying arms to make the Shah's Iran a fortress for guarding the oil fields and striking liberation movements, such as the PFLO in Oman. Israeli military exports to Iran in turn contributed greatly to the imperialist-Zionist strategy of strengthening the Israeli economic base via militarizing its industry and export. For example, Tadiran, the third largest Israeli industrial firm, sold whole arms factories to Iran. «Iran before the revolution was purchasing half a billion dollars worth of Israeli goods, mostly

arms. Perhaps a third of Israel's arms export market disappeared with the revolution» (*MERIP Middle East Report* No. 144, January - February 1987, page 2). The Shah's overthrow meant \$225 million in Israeli losses in 1978 and the same for 1979; 2,000 workers were dismissed from Sultan, an artillery manufacturer, as a result (Shahak, Israel, *Israel's Global Role. Weapons for Repression*, 1982, p. 36). Recovering this market was a main motivation for Israeli involvement in the Reagan Administration's «arms-for-hostages» deal.

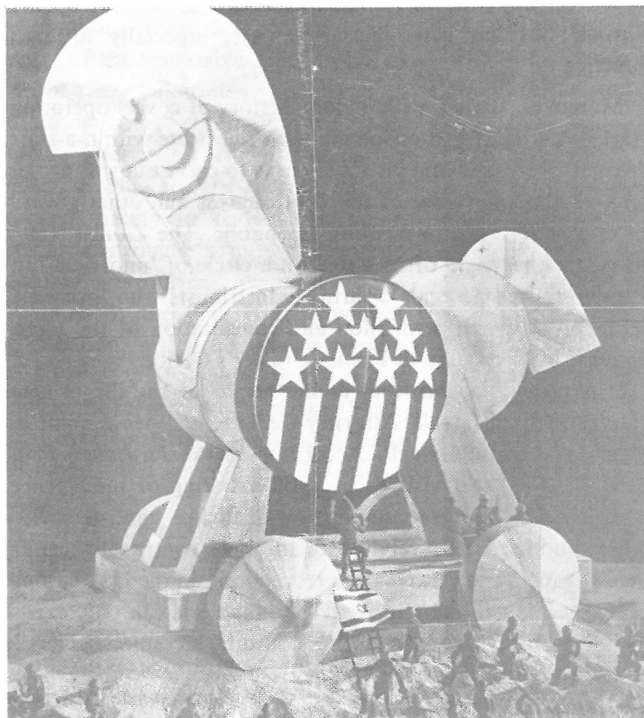
Besides bolstering Iran's aggressive regional stance, the Zionist state contributed heavily to the Shah regime's internal repression. Yaacov Nimrodi, an Israeli arms dealer who was pivotal in Irangate, was heard to boast: «I built the Iranian intelligence» (*MERIP* No. 144, p. 3). Nimrodi was originally a military intelligence officer and served as the Israeli military attache to Iran from 1960 to 1974, while the Israeli intelligence trained the torturers of SAVAK, the Shah's extensive and hated secret police network.

Israeli relations with Iran preceded the 1956 attack on Egypt as the Zionist state tried to rally allies in its crusade against the Arab national movement and the spread of communism. According to the CIA report on the Mossad, which was found in the US embassy in Tehran after the Iranian revolution: «A formal trilateral liaison called the 'Trident' organization was established by Mossad with Turkey's National Security Service (TNSS) and Iran's National Organization for Intelligence and Security (SAVAK) in late 1958... The general terms of the original agreement with the Turks, aside from legitimizing Israeli liaison with Turkey, stated that Mossad would furnish information on the activity of Soviet agents in Turkey and those working against Turkey throughout the Middle East. In return, the Turks agreed to supply Israel with information on the political intentions of the Arab countries which could affect the security of Israel, and the activity and identifications of the UAR agents working against Israel... Mossad has engaged in joint operations with SAVAK over the years since the late 1950s. The Israelis also regularly transmitted to the Iranian intelligence reports on Egypt's activities in the Arab countries, trends and developments in Iraq, and communist activities affecting Iran» (as reprinted in *Al Fajr*, January 28, 1983).

Iran was the only regional power to make a significant contribution to Israeli aggression in the early period: It supplied oil to the Zionist state during the 1967 war. Though full diplomatic relations were never established, the Zionist-Shah cooperation extended even to the nuclear field.

As reported in *The Observer* of February 2, 1986, «In spring 1977 Shimon Peres, by then Defense Minister, flew to Tehran for talks with the Shah. The outcome was a secret \$1 billion oil-for-arms agreement which covered six military projects, the most important of which was Flower.» Flower was the codename for a project to build a nuclear missile. In July 1977, Iranian Defense Minister Toufani was hosted by his Zionist counterpart at a test showing of the prototype missile, minus nuclear warhead, in the Negev. Toufani was «impatient for it to be deployed along his country's long borders with the Soviet Union and Iraq.» The Shah regime contributed to funding the project in the form of a guaranteed supply of 80 million barrels of oil. The deal was arranged through a Swiss front company

«Israel» - the US's Trojan horse in the Middle East.



in an attempt to disguise the parties involved. The missiles were to be assembled and tested in Iran whose larger territory provided more space and possibilities for secrecy. In 1978, Iran made its down payment, \$260 million worth of oil, and sent engineers to 'Israel' to begin designing the assembly plant. Though these plans were disrupted by the Shah's overthrow, 'Israel' profited from the contribution to continue its development of the nuclear-tipped Jericho missile which is now stationed in the occupied Golan Heights and Negev.

STRIKING BACK

Having worked in tandem with the Shah on secret military and intelligence projects, the Zionists reverted to their regional strike force role upon his fall. While US imperialism was caught off-guard by the quick succession of events, Zionist figures took the lead in advocating modes of dealing with revolutionary Iran. Returning to 'Israel', an Israeli who had served as adviser to the Iranian regime, wrote in *Haaretz*, January 10, 1978, that the Shah should have been much tougher, «putting strikers in front of machine guns» because «The Iranian people are not yet ready for democracy.» Israeli General Dan Shamron (now chief of staff) counselled the US on the hostages in Iran: «The fact of liberating them is more important than the cost in human lives.» Labor MK Meir Amit, former Israeli army intelligence and Mossad head, contended that «a clear military option exists, not precisely in order to extricate the hostages who are in the Embassy, but in order to solve a much more extensive problem... The US can and is obligated to insure its supply of oil from Iran by a military action to seize the region... This operation would bring about an American 'new order' in which every crazy nation must submit to the rules of the game» (*Maariv*, November 16, 1979).

In connection with the Irangate hearings, facts have come to light that military action against Iran was in fact seriously contemplated. Retired US Air Force General Secord, a central figure in Irangate, told *Playboy* magazine in an interview that a «small invasion» of Iran was planned after the failure of the US mission in 1980, purportedly to rescue the American hostages in Teheran (*International Herald Tribune*, September 3, 1987). In August this year, the *Washington Post* revealed a joint Israeli-US plan for military action after September 1985, when initial arms shipments to Iran failed to gain the release of all the hostages in Lebanon.

IRANGATE

Short of conventional aggression, 'Israel' began shipment of US arms to Iran from the early stages of the Gulf war, aiming to make money while detracting Arab and Iranian resources from the main struggle in the area against the Zionist state and imperialist intervention. According to some reports, these arms shipments were quietly approved by the US administration, or parts of it, from the beginning. Other motives played a role as well. The Zionist state used these arms shipments to secure the immigration of Iranian Jews to 'Israel', since according to Zionist ideology all Jews living in 'unfriendly' countries are considered 'hostages'. While the Zionist leadership denied such

cynical games, in 1984 «Israel announced that it was *halting* a 'Jews-for-arms' agreement that had been formally concluded between the two governments in early 1980» (*Israeli Foreign Affairs*, February 1985). In the wake of the Irangate scandal, reports have again surfaced that 'Israel' is offering arms in return for the remaining Iranian Jews' immigration.

The Zionist leadership has also toyed with the idea of trying to subvert the Iranian government from within. According to the testimony of former National Security Council consultant, Michael A. Ledeen, in October 1985 the Israelis were discussing the use of the profits from arms sales to Iran to pay an Iranian official «who wanted to change the government... by parliamentary means...» He had purportedly asked for small arms and silencers in order to «protect him and his allies» (*International Herald Tribune*, September 30, 1987). In an interview with the *Boston Globe*, Moshe Arens, then Israeli ambassador to the US, stated that Israel had provided arms to Iran «in coordination with the US government... at almost the highest of levels... The objective was to see if we could not find some areas of contact with the Iranian military, to bring down the Khomeini regime» (quoted in Chomsky, Noam, *The Fateful Triangle*, 1983, p.457).

Another aim was gaining access to Soviet weapon systems. According to Anthony H. Cordesman, writing in *American-Arab Affairs*, Spring 1987, US and Israeli intelligence officials tried to obtain captured Iraqi weapons such as the T-72 tank, by leading Iran to believe it would receive fighters, tanks and helicopters from private sources; and 'Israel' sought to trade arms for captured Soviet tanks.

With over two decades of experience in infiltrating Iran in line with the periphery orientation, 'Israel' was the ideal partner for the Reagan Administration's ill-fated arms sales to Iran and the diversion of profits to the contras. In effect, 'Israel' and the US teamed up to make the Islamic Republic foot the bill for one of their dirtiest covert operations. It is not the first time the Zionist state had a role in securing arms for forces which US imperialism found it awkward to support openly. Rather, this has often been the case, especially in Latin America.

Moreover, 'Israel' with its long history of covert operations was ideally suited to cooperate with the 'state-within-a-state' created by Reagan and his inner circle to carry out this project without the knowledge of the US Congress and other governmental bodies, not to mention the public. The Zionist state's own arms deals are often based on a circle of 'unofficial' officials - retired generals or arms industrialists who 'privately' sell arms with the permission and consultation of the Israeli Defense Ministry and/or Prime Minister's Office.

It is no coincidence that at the height of the illegal arms shipments to Iran, US Attorney-General Ed Meese made an eight-day visit to 'Israel'. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, May 30, 1986, his visit focused on «sharing of intelligence, doctrine and tactics» and institutionalizing «anti-terrorist» cooperation. If the revelation of the Iran/contragate scandal does, as some predict, result in restrictions on the US National Security Council and CIA activities, then one can only expect greater US reliance on 'Israel' to continue its espionage as the CIA's extended arm in the Middle East.

Al Ard

Al Ard (The Land) folklore group, based in Yarmouk camp, Damascus, works to perpetuate Palestinian popular culture through music and dance. The following article is based on interviews with *Al Ard*'s director, Ali Bajis, and other members of the group.

Not only did the Israeli occupation usurp the land of Palestine; the Zionists have also tried to destroy or steal the Palestinian culture, even claiming some of its elements as their own. Thus, preserving Palestinian culture is an important facet of the Palestinian national liberation struggle. The Palestinian people realize that a people without culture are people without identity. They have thus worked to perpetuate their culture. As a result, many folklore groups have been founded in occupied Palestine and among Palestinian communities in exile. *Al Ard* is one of these groups. Through song and dance, it has succeeded in converting folklore into one prong of the fierce struggle against the Zionist and imperialist enemy.

BEGINNINGS IN BEIRUT

Al Ard was originally established in Beirut in 1977, by a number of Palestinian artists and musical performers living outside their homeland, due to the occupation. They realized that one aspect of the aggressive Zionist plan to uproot the Palestinian people as a whole was the elimination of their culture heritage, thus eradicating Palestine's history. In Beirut, *Al Ard* worked mainly to revive Palestinian folklore through song, dance and costume. However, its work was disrupted by the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which targetted a variety of cultural, civilian and social institutions in the attempt to destroy the PLO. Most of the group's equipment was destroyed, and several members were martyred.

REORGANIZATION

Two years later, in Damascus, 1984, efforts were made to reestablish the group. Ali Bajis, who had worked with *Al Ard* in Beirut, was put in charge of

reestablishing and managing the group. Ali Bajis, better known as Abu Imad, is the only professionally trained musician in the group. He studied music in Jerusalem in 1957, and later worked in this field in Amman, Jordan, before joining the Palestinian revolution in 1970. As well as directing *Al Ard*, Abu Imad is a member of the executive council of the General Union of Palestinian Expressive (Performing) Artists.

In Damascus, *Al Ard*'s work was more systematically organized. The organizing committee adopted an internal charter or rules and regulations governing the functioning of the group. The criteria for membership were specified as being democratic, committed to the national cause and possessing talent relevant to the group's aims and work.

The search began for qualified young men and women. Abu Imad emphasized that in recruiting to *Al Ard*, «We focused on the person's national commitment. Concerning talent, if the person had basic abilities, we knew we could refine and polish these.» Very

few professionally trained artists have joined the group so, especially in the beginning, great efforts and long hours were expended on training the majority. The background of some of *Al Ard*'s performers gives an idea of how the group developed. Yasmin, one of the dancers, had been performing with the Ghassan Kanafani youth group since 1979, and was the first female to join *Al Ard* after it was reorganized in Damascus. Another of the dancers, Sumayah, emphasized that she had «one thing in common with everyone else in the group - a great commitment to our cause and strong interest in folklore.» This, she said, had helped her to endure the extensive training in the beginning, but mainly she credited *Al Ard* itself, which «has really become a school of Palestinian folklore», for enabling her to develop into a professional dancer.

One of *Al Ard*'s singers is Ahmed, a Palestinian who grew up in Naireb camp in northern Syria. Before joining the group three years ago, he was working in Aleppo, and singing old Palestinian songs as a hobby at weddings and nationalist celebrations. He learned *Al Ard* songs from listening to them on tapes. When he finally had the chance to attend one of the group's performances, he was motivated to join. Abu Imad listened to Ahmed's voice and thought that, although untrained, he had great potential. Today Ahmed says he learned everything he knows about music from *Al Ard*.



MUSIC AND DANCE

Shortly after its reestablishment, the group was divided into two subgroups for the purpose of specializing in music and dance, respectively. The dance group, trained and led by Fuad Nahar and Tarek Samallouti, concentrated on debka, the traditional Palestinian folkdance which has many variations. The music and choral group was led by Abu Imad. The subgroups rehearse separately in order to perfect their specialty, and jointly to prepare for performances combining both elements.

The musicians play all the basic Arabic instruments. One of these is the *qanoun*, a stringed instrument resembling the zither with a shallow trapezoidal sound box set horizontally before the musician. Another is the *aoud*, a form of lute. Yet others are the Arabic-style flute made of bamboo, without a mouthpiece, and the drums. In addition to these, the main instruments of the group are ancient Palestinian instruments such as the *rababa*, a stringed instrument resembling the fiddle; the *shabbaba*, a reed flute;

flute; and the famous *urghoul*, a wind instrument related to the clarinet, consisting of two pipes of unequal lengths.

THE PALESTINIAN EXPERIENCE AS OPERETTA

During the past three years, *Al Ard* has developed the art of presenting stories through song and dance in a form of operetta. These operettas aim at portraying the experience and agony of the Palestinian people not for the purpose of eliciting sympathy, but for mass education and mobilization. The first such musical was entitled «Sabra and Shatila». Its intent was to show that living in camps is not the natural state of the Palestinian people, but something that was forced on them, and which they reject, all the more so because it exposes them to attacks and humiliation. In this musical, *Al Ard* introduced a song which brought them fame. The opening verse is as follows:

*Who forces us to stay in camps
to endure calamities and stand
to receive the blows*

waiting for a new massacre?

The concluding line of the song is: *We shall return*, emphasizing that the alternative to camp life is repatriation in Palestine.

In 1984, *Al Ard* performed in an international anti-racist rally in London, having been invited by the city's mayor. They performed the «Sabra and Shatila» musical in Queen Elizabeth Theater; a large number of pro-Zionists were present in the audience. Although the musical does not explicitly pinpoint the Israeli role in the massacre, these pro-Zionists caused disorder while the performance was in progress. For days, news about *Al Ard* reverberated in the London press, with right-wing forces labelling not only the group but the mayor of London as 'terrorist' for having invited them. Soon afterwards, this mayor was forced to resign. While a number of factors were involved, Abu Imad remains convinced that the Zionist reaction to the performance had much to do with his resignation.

Al Ard has distinguished itself with these operettas. Its second, entitled





«Sea Chant», deals with the life of the Palestinian fishermen before 1948, and their role in the struggle after the occupation. Life along Palestine's coast is one of four areas of the popular culture on which *Al Ard* has concentrated in its works. For the purpose of illuminating the Palestinian culture in detail, the group defined four areas: the village, the city, the desert (bedouin culture) and the coast. Covering all of Palestine in cultural terms, *Al Ard* has, through songs and dance, given expression to the village woman, the fisherman, the camp child, the old man who is still waiting to return to his home in Haifa, the fedai (freedom fighter) and all the Palestinian people - their pain and their hopes.

Al Ard has gained popularity because, as Abu Imad explained, it «adheres to the issues relevant to the masses, and dares to present them with courage.» The group has always conveyed a clear political message to its audiences, based on belief in mobilizing the masses. One example is their song against the Amman accord with the Jordanian regime, and against relations with reactionary regimes. One verse goes as follows:

*He who surrenders is not one of us.
It is the Palestinian gun that speaks
for us...
Freedom must be taken, it will not
be given...*

Describing the first time he watched *Al Ard* perform, Ahmed, eighteen years old and now a dancer in the group, said, «Their performance really touched my heart.» Ahmed had lived with his family in Egypt for many years, far from the arena of Palestinian struggle. He saw *Al Ard* while visiting Yarmouk camp in 1985, and today he tells that «I felt very close to home.» He joined the group the same year.

HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Al Ard has formed a committee for collecting Palestinian heritage, which searches for old poems, songs and stories. The committee's main resource is elderly Palestinians. Abu Imad says, «The old people have committed a great deal to memory. By going back to them, we ensure the authenticity of the culture.» Members of the committee visit Palestinian camps, meeting with people to gather information about traditions and costumes in different parts of Palestine. All the material

gathered is stored in an archive for future reference.

There is also an educational committee which is charged with keeping in contact with progressive nationalist Palestinian and Arab writers and poets who sometimes contribute to *Al Ard*'s work.

The *Al Ard* 'family' believes that the Palestinian Expressive Artists Union should be more active in consolidating the role of cultural groups and enlisting more Palestinian artists from all over the world to contribute to protecting and developing the Palestinian culture. «Our revolution is not only with bullets,» says Abu Imad, «It's media and bullets.» Pointing to the need for the union to do more to expose Zionist theft of the Palestinian heritage, he tells how he saw «with my own eyes, the urghoul on display in European museums, labeled as an Israeli instrument.» He reminded that the stewardesses on El Al wear the Palestinian national dress as if it were Israeli heritage.

Abu Imad also spoke of the importance of the international allies of the Palestinian revolution supporting efforts to protect the Palestinian civilization and spread its cultural heritage. This can be by inviting folklore groups to perform, or offering Palestinian artists and musicians opportunities to study.

PERFORMANCES ABROAD

Besides performing in Syria and Lebanon, and London as mentioned, *Al Ard* visited Libya in 1985, to perform in the September 1st celebration of the Libyan revolution. The same year, the group participated in the World Youth Festival in Moscow. In 1986, *Al Ard* was invited to the United Arab Emirates by the Department of Culture. The group toured the major towns of the UAE where it was enthusiastically received by citizens and the resident Palestinians. Sumayeh says, «People rushed to talk to us after each performance. They looked like they had yearned for their homeland.»

Al Ard has produced four cassette tapes: «The Political Song», «*Al Ard*», «Folklore Selections» and «Sabra»; in addition, there is a video tape of the group's performance in the UAE. ●



Abu Hassan and the Urghoul

Abu Hassan, one of *Al Ard's* members, personifies the link between the group and the Palestinian heritage it strives to perpetuate. Abu Hassan is 58 years old and is one of very few Palestinians who still play the *urghoul*. He was born in northern Palestine in Naser Al Deen village, near Tiberius, in 1929. He experienced the 1948 war and occupation. Abu Hassan told about these times - fleeing from one village to another, fighting against the British colonialists and the Zionist settlers. He then told the painful story of leaving Palestine, that ended with him and his family living in Khan Al Sheih camp in Syria, near the borders.

Since he was eight years old, Abu Hassan has been interested in the *urghoul*. «When I was a child, I used to sneak away from home and walk -sometimes for hours - through mountainous areas to get to a wedding in another village, just to hear a certain young man play the *urghoul*. Once he arrived, all the others modestly put their *shabbabas* away, and made room for him.»

Abu Hassan followed the shepherds and tended their animals in return for

their giving him *urghoul* lessons. Finally, he decided he would depend on himself. He listened to famous *urghoul* players at weddings and imitated them. When he was sixteen, he was able to play the nicest melodies in weddings himself. By then he knew the music for the *debka* for all the different villages in Palestine. Abu Hassan also taught himself how to make his own instruments. «I used to walk for hours to find bamboo with the right size stalks and no knots. Then I would take a stalk to the instrument maker and sit with him until it was done.» Later he learned to make his own *urghoul*.

In Syria, Abu Hassan worked in construction for two years, and played the *urghoul* at weddings for free. When the demand for his music increased, he began to play professionally.

About his work in *Al Ard*, Abu Hassan said, «I consider myself a fighter in a front for protecting the Palestinian culture from Israeli robbery.» Abu Hassan played with the group when it was in Beirut. It is said that on one occasion, his performance made the audience cry. In the Soviet Union, Abu Hassan played the *urghoul*

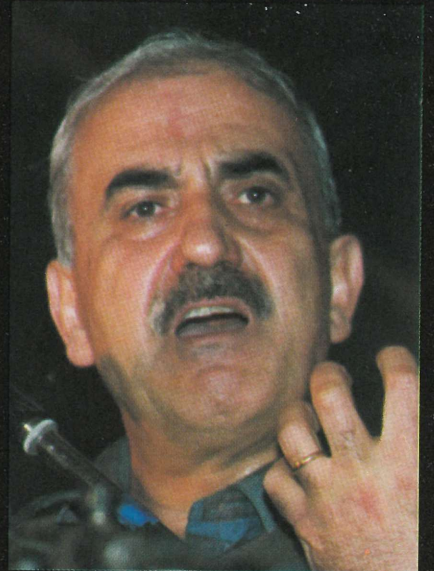
in front of the hotel for hundreds of Soviets, after *Al Ard's* stage performance was over. «The Soviet people were very interested in my instrument,» he recalls.

Regarding the *urghoul's* history, Abu Hassan explained that the Canaanites (ancient people of Palestine) were the first to discover that blowing in hollow bones made nice sounds. The instrument was first developed in Al Hemma in the Tiberius district, made from bamboo with holes put in it. Until now, Abu Hassan explained, the Tiberius area is famous for making *urghouls* and other wind instruments. «The length and width of the *urghoul* makes a big difference in the tune.» Abu Hassan has made many *urghouls* for himself, for different occasions. The *urghoul* player must have strong lungs. When he was younger, Abu Hassan played for eight hours straight; now he can play for three or four. Abu Hassan concludes, «More Palestinians need to learn to play the *urghoul*. It is an element of old Palestinian culture, and we want to make sure it never dies.»

PFLP 20th Anniversary



Comrade Habash at the exhibition of Palestinian art at the Soviet cultural center



Comrade Habash addresses the rally



