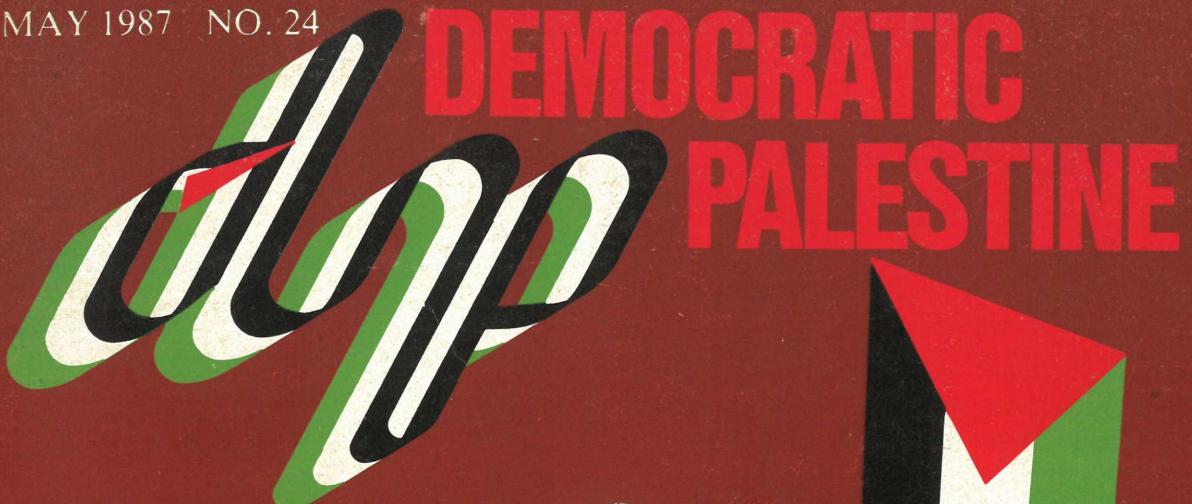


MAY 1987 NO. 24

# DEMOCRATIC PALESTINE



PLO Reunited



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

- Conveying the political line of progressive Palestinian and Arab forces;
- Providing current information and analysis pertinent to the Palestinian liberation struggle, as well as developments on the Arab and international levels;
- Serving as 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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The PNC.



# Editorial

## Unifying Palestinian National Council

Palestinians, patriotic Arabs and progressives from all over the world celebrated the convening of the Palestinian National Council's session of national unity and steadfastness, held in Algiers, April 20-26th, which resulted in reunifying the PLO on a patriotic basis.

It was well-known to Palestinians that the main reason for the disruption of the PLO's unity was the right wing's policy which was manifest in the following:(1) establishing strong, official relations with the Egyptian regime and succumbing to its pressure which aimed to transform the PLO from a revolutionary body into reactionary one;(2) signing the Amman accord with King Hussein, giving the Jordanian regime the right to share the PLO's representation of the Palestinian people; (3) showing signs of readiness to recognize security Council resolutions 242 and 338 which deal with the Palestinian cause as a question of refugees,that could be solved by resettlement or some kind of charity; and(4) trying to impose the political line of one group (Fatah) on the PLO as a whole by dominating all its institutions.

These moves by the rightists led to disrupting Palestinian national unity and the unity of the PLO, a situation which was further aggravated by the convening of an illegal session of the PNC in Amman in 1984.

### IMPETUS TOWARDS UNITY

Since that time, a series of developments have occurred, presenting the possibility of restoring the PLO's unity on a nationalist basis. Chief among the factors pushing for renewed Palestinian unity were the ceaseless efforts of imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction to impose their conditions on the PLO's rightist leadership without giving anything in return. This was a main factor forcing the right wing to reconsider its policy, rather than risk losing the support of the Palestinian masses altogether.

Another main factor mitigating for Palestinian unity was the dangerous situation facing the Palestinian camps and revolution in Lebanon. This portended serious damage to the Palestinian people and their struggle if the PLO did not unite on a nationalist basis to face the situation.

A third factor pushing for renewed Palestinian unity was the efforts made in good faith by progressive Palestinian forces, on the political and mass levels, to reunite the PLO and restore its national program.

A fourth significant factor was the great efforts exerted by the Palestinian revolution's Arab and international allies, especially Algeria, Libya, Democratic Yemen and the Soviet Union.

The combination of these factors led to a meeting of six Palestinian organizations in Tripoli, Libya, to discuss Palesti-

nian national unity and the reunification of the PLO. This meeting resulted in a document to be put to discussion in the Palestinian national dialogue which began in Algeria on April 13th and culminated in the convening of the PNC on April 20th.

### RESTORING THE NATIONAL PROGRAM

Great efforts were expended by those participating in the national dialogue to enable the holding of the PNC. Equally great efforts had to be made at the PNC session itself to maintain this agreement. In both instances, the most controversial issue was the PLO's relations with the Egyptian regime. The problem was not limited to the right-wing forces who wanted to maintain these relations. Arab reaction, via the Egyptian regime, staged a blatant attempt to interfere in the PNC's decision-making. The Egyptian regime applied pressure and threatened retaliatory measures against the Palestinian people if the PLO were to sever relations with it.

However, thanks to persistent efforts by the Palestinian progressive organizations in particular, all these pressures came to naught. The PLO adopted a political program which stipulates keeping good relations with the Egyptian nationalist forces while severing relations with the regime as long as it adheres to the Camp David accords.

The PNC also stressed rejection of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, because they don't deal with the Palestinian question as a political cause of a people who want to return to their homeland and establish their own independent state.

Concerning organizational matters, the PNC decided that a collective leadership should be elected from among the members of the Executive Committee, to serve as the PLO's daily leadership. It was also decided that the Executive Committee will reconsider the structure and personnel of PLO offices in all countries.

To these achievements should be added the public and official cancellation of the Amman accord before the convening of the PNC session. Moreover, clear decisions were taken stressing the PLO's will to improve relations with Syria.

The political and organizational programs adopted at this session of the PNC have restored the PLO's nationalist line. At the same time, Palestinian unity has been restored since all the major organizations of the Palestinian revolution were participants in the PNC. All Palestinian nationalists and progressives should support the PLO in implementing its newly adopted decisions. At the same time, those organizations who boycotted the PNC session should join in and play a more active, constructive role in the Palestinian struggle led by a unified PLO, the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

# Palestinian National Dialogue

On April 13th, a week of inter-Palestinian dialogue began in Algiers, in preparation for the Palestinian National Council that convened on April 20th. After meeting with PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat for the first time since 1983, PFLP SecretaryGeneral George Habash announced that Fatah had decided to cancel the Amman accord signed by Arafat and Jordan's King Hussein in February 1985. With the removal of this big obstacle to Palestinian national unity, the comprehensive dialogue began.

Participating in the dialogue from the beginning were the PFLP, DFLP, Fatah's Central Committee, Popular Struggle Front (PSF), Arab Liberation Front (ALF), Revolutionary Council (Abu Nidal) and the two branches of the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF), led by Talat Yacoub and Abu Abbas, respectively. While the PSF and Abu Nidal withdrew from the dialogue due to dissatisfaction with the results, the Palestinian communist Party joined in the last days preceding the PNC.

Previous contacts and agreements among Palestinian resistance organizations had laid the basis for the national dialogue, including the Tripoli document (see text in this issue) and the Tunis document agreed on between Fatah's Central Committee, DFLP and PCP. Also contributing to the dialogue were the views of Palestinian independents.

Attending the April 13th meeting between Arafat and Habash were Khalil Al Wazir (Abu Jihad), Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), Hani Al Hassan and Hayel Abdul Hamid from Fatah, and comrades Abu Ali Mustafa, Abdul Rahim Mallouh and Omar Quteish from the PFLP. After the meeting, comrade Habash stated: «...brother Yasir Arafat reaffirmed the decision of Fatah's Central Committee to cancel the Amman accord. He also reassured the PFLP delegation that a PLO Executive Committee meeting would be held to issue an official cancellation of that accord prior to the PNC's convening. For the PFLP, «the official cancellation of the Amman accord opens the way for discussing political and organizational issues which the Front considers essential for the restoration of the PLO's unity on a firm basis.»

On April 14th, dialogue continued between the secretary generals of the Palestinian organizations. The different viewpoints concerning relations with Egypt were reviewed. Fatah advocated continuing these relations, while the PFLP made breaking relations with the Camp David regime a precondition for its participation in the PNC. The DFLP called for an intermediate solution to this problem. This disagreement did not, however, change the overwhelmingly optimistic atmosphere among the main resistance organizations.

Dr. Habash indicated that the PFLP had not yet decided finally whether or not to participate in the PNC, saying that this depended on the developments in the dialogue, in particular reaching agreement on relations with the Egyptian regime. Comrade Habash added that the PFLP would «exhaust all efforts to reach an agreement, bearing in mind the tragedy the Palestinian people are experiencing in the occupied territories and in the camps of Lebanon.»

The third day of the dialogue was dedicated to a general discussion of the internal situation in the PLO and relations with the Arab states.

On April 16th, there was a meeting between the delegation of Fatah, headed by Yasir Arafat, and the PFLP delegation, led by comrade Habash. On this day, Hani Al Hassan, Fatah Central Committee member and political advisor to Arafat, created uneasiness among the participants in the dialogue with his speech. Some interpreted it as an attempt to justify continuing relations with Egypt, on the pretext of preventing further tightening of the siege around the PLO. Others considered that Hassan's speech ignored the Egyptian regime's true position on

an international conference in order to conclude that relations with this regime were necessary to make such a conference successful.

Discussions continued between the Palestinian leaders on April 17th. A meeting of the secretary generals of the participating organizations reviewed the proposals made by the committee responsible for formulating communiques, and discussed the issues of disagreement. The discussions focused on an international conference, relations with Egypt and with Syria.

Mohammad Sharif Musa'idiya, the second man in the Algerian leadership, and Ahmad Taleb Al Ibrahim, Algerian foreign minister, began efforts with the Palestinian leaders to resolve the obstacles to convening the PNC. Comrade Ali Salem Al Beedh, secretary general of the Yemeni Socialist Party, also participated in these efforts. As a result, a meeting took place on April 19th between Algerian President Shadli Ben Jadeed and the Palestinian leaders. The Algerian president conveyed his relief about the great political and organizational results that had been achieved.

Comrade Bassam Abu Sharif, PFLP Central Committee member, confirmed that the PFLP had become more optimistic about the prospects for convening the PNC, adding that a solution to the problem of relations with Egypt was very close at hand. He confirmed that Algeria, Democratic Yemen and Libya were playing a positive role in promoting the success of the dialogue.

On April 20th, prior to the convening of the PNC session, comrade Habash held a press conference, explaining the PFLP's decision to participate: «In the light of the meeting that took place with President Shadli, the PFLP decided at 4 p.m. Sunday (April 19th) to participate in the PNC. In view of the PFLP's analysis of the problems that led to the PLO's division over the past three years, we outlined the political and organizational basis whereby unity could be restored... cancelling the Amman accord, stopping relations with the Egyptian government and adhering to political principles and organizational reform, i.e. collective leadership... We still consider this basis necessary for the restoration of the PLO's unity so that it can be an in-

strument for liberation.» He pointed out that this basis was clearly outlined in the Tripoli document.

Comrade Habash noted that the Amman accord had been officially cancelled, but that it had not been possible to adopt as clear a position on relations with the Egyptian regime as in the Tripoli document. «However, we have reached a formula which we clearly understand as meaning to stop these relations, and that these relations will be based on the decisions of the PNC and Arab summits... We preferred to have a clearer position on Egypt, one that would not be subject to change or to different interpretations.» Comrade Habash reaffirmed that the Palestinians' basic tenets are the program for return, self-determination and an in-

dependent state, and that the PLO is their sole, legitimate representative, with no sharing or mandating of its representation.

Comrade Habash noted that agreement on forming a collective leadership had been reached during the dialogue, as well as agreement on implementing the organizational section of the Aden-Algiers accord. He affirmed that the PFLP will continue to struggle for developing the PLO's political line and organizational structure. He pointed out that the reasons that had led to the formation of the Palestine National Salvation Front no longer prevailed, noting that this front had been «a provisional framework with the aim of returning the PLO to the correct political line.» ●

## The PNC

The PNC's unifying session, dedicated to the steadfastness of the camps and the people's struggle in the occupied territories, opened in Algiers on the afternoon of April 20th. Besides the Palestinian delegations, the council was attended by Arab officials, representatives of Arab nationalist regimes and liberation movements, delegations from the socialist and non-aligned countries, from progressive organizations and national liberation movements around the world, in addition to hundreds of journalists.

After a moment of silence was observed in memory of the martyrs of the Palestinian revolution, speeches began. The main speakers were PNC President Sheikh Al Sayih, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, Secretary General of the Yemeni Socialist Party Ali Salem Al Beed, Idrise Al Banna of Sudan, Secretary General of POLISARIO Mohammed Abdul Aziz, Arab League Secretary General Shadli Qleibi, and Secretary General of the Islamic Conference Organization Sharif Birzada.

After the speeches, Abu Al Adib, Fatah Central Committee member, read out the list of names of the PNC members. It was announced that the official quorum was achieved by more than 30. Present were 319 members from a total of 426. Five PNC members were unable to attend because they are imprisoned in Arab countries. Of these

are PFLP Politbureau member Azmi Khawaja and Ahmed Musleh, both held in Jordan. In the following days, more members of the PNC arrived.

The council resumed its session the next day, and was addressed by Vasili Tartota, Central Committee member of the CPSU, on the importance of national unity. Speeches were also delivered by representatives of Cuba, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland, China, Zambia, the Italian Communist Party, Iraq, North Yemen and others.

### POLITICAL REPORT

On the third day of the council's session, Farouq Qaddoumi submitted the political report, covering the most prominent political developments from 1983 until the present, especially the political activities the PLO had been involved in and Palestinian-Arab rela-

tions. The financial report was also submitted.

The political report overlooked many important issues. While not attempting to defend the Amman accord, the report failed to address its essence, focusing instead on the reactions and differences it had generated in the Palestinian, Arab and international arenas. The report noted that the Jordanian government's decision to stop political coordination with the PLO had naturally put the accord out of function.

On the Arab level, the report stated that Egypt is still far removed from joint Arab action, due to its adherence to the Camp David accords. The report mentioned Shimon Peres' visits to some Arab capitals, without even naming them.

Concerning the international peace conference, the report explained that the PLO's acceptance of an international will to convene a conference on the Middle East conflict was new evidence of the goals of the Palestinian people's struggle. The report added that the US and Israeli positions, by demanding a conference without authority and considering direct negotiations as the basis of any settlement, deprive the conference of its true content. The report highly praised the socialist countries' positions for being based on firm, consistent principles, supporting the Palestinian people's struggle and the PLO.

Concerning the Western European countries, the report stated that «these countries have not yet proved their good intentions towards the struggle and rights of the Palestinian people.» The report attributed a big part of the responsibility for this to the US administration's position of obstructing any development of the European position. The report mentioned some recent, positive aspects of the EEC's position.

In conclusion, the report reaffirmed the necessity of restoring the effectiveness of Arab solidarity. It called for a halt to the Iraq-Iran war, for consolidating the Arab League's capabilities, for eliminating the effects of the Camp David accords, and restoring Palestinian-Syrian relations to their natural state. ►

Despite the positive aspects of the report, it ignored many important issues such as the PLO's relations with the Egyptian regime despite the latter's adherence to the Camp David accords. The report also tended to equate the PLO's relations with the Arab nationalist regimes with its relations with the reactionary regimes. The report failed to review the problems that have arisen in Palestinian-Arab relations, and the bold intervention of some Arab regimes in Palestinian internal affairs. It was moreover not clear if the political report was presented in the name of the PLO's political department or the Executive Committee.

Meanwhile, the ten committees concerned with the PLO's different fields of work had begun meeting. They continued their meetings on the fourth day of the council. At the council's general session, the Palestinian Communist Party was officially accepted as a PNC member. The council then accepted 21 new members - four from the Palestinian Liberation Front, seven from the PCP and ten independents.

On the fifth day of the session, the committees had finished most of their work. Five reports were discussed in the council - those of the education committee, the social committee, the economic and finance committee, the literature and information committee, and the committee on the occupied territories. The report of the military committee was forwarded to the Executive Committee. On the sixth day of the session, the recommendations of the committee on popular organizations were approved by the PNC.

## RELATIONS BROKEN WITH EGYPT

The atmosphere was tense the last day of the council because of fear that the achievements so far made would be disrupted. All concentrated on the developments between the organizations concerning relations with Egypt, to the extent that the general session was largely neglected. The majority of members and guests were waiting for the results of the political committee's meeting dedicated to discussing the statement to be issued concerning relations with Egypt, in the final communique.

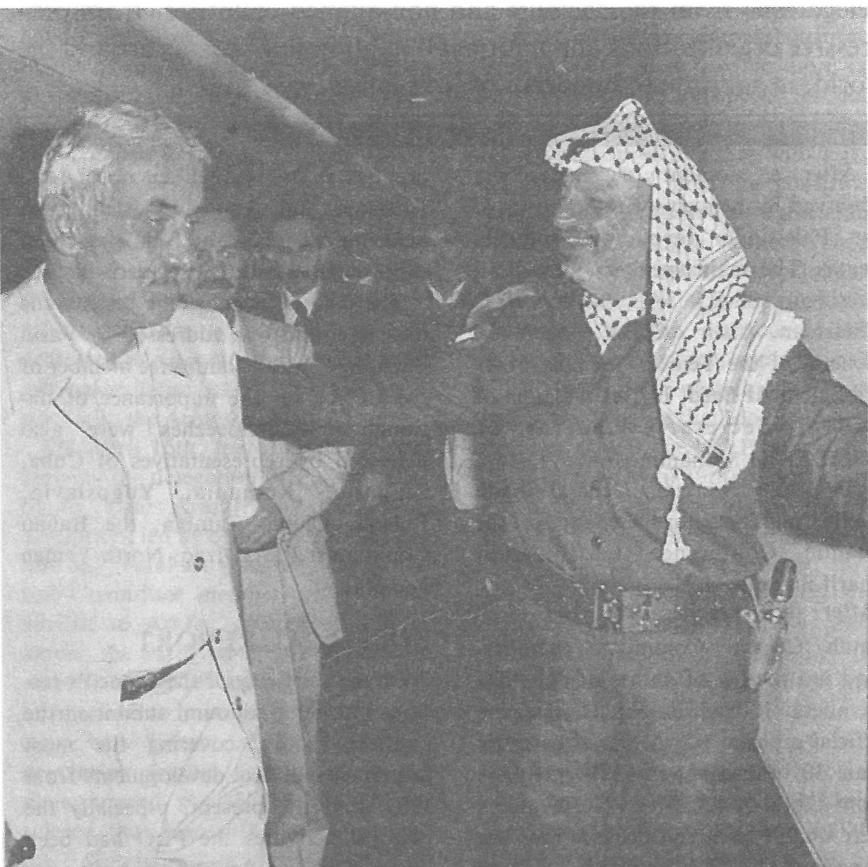
A meeting between the PFLP and Fatah delegations had reached agreement on the issue, but Fatah, under pressure from the Egyptian regime, attempted to alter the agreement. The changes requested by Yasir Arafat undermined the basis of the agreement. The PFLP protested this postponement, pointing out that the PNC had been convened on the basis of a political and organizational agreement that was binding.

Faced with the PFLP's firm position, and the position of some Fatah leaders as well, Arafat yielded and accepted the original agreement with the omission of one phrase. The agreement stated that relations with Egypt would be based on the decisions of previous PNCs, especially the 16th session, and on Arab summit resolutions, in particular those of the Baghdad Summit. The phrase omitted was that naming the Baghdad Summit in particular. After the removal of this obstacle, most observers considered that the matter was finished and national unity had been achieved.

However, the issue was brought up again. In a meeting with the PFLP's

delegation, Arafat said that he had received a warning from Egypt's President Mubarak. Arafat said that a solution should be found, for the PLO could not break relations with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco at one time. PFLP Deputy Secretary General Abu Ali Mustafa explained that the PFLP would not accept any changes in the formula agreed on about relations with Egypt, especially after the Egyptian threats which constituted interference in Palestinian national decision-making. Following that, the political committee adopted the resolution as it had previously been agreed.

A second warning was issued by the Egyptian regime, delivered to Arafat by the head of the official Egyptian delegation at the PNC. It stated that the delegation was withdrawing from the council session. Arafat and some Executive Committee members once again asked for changes to be made in the resolution. The PFLP again rejected such changes, stressing that bowing to these warnings would degrade the PLO's independence. The PFLP threatened to withdraw from par-



ticipation in the PLO leadership if changes were made in the resolution.

Still Arafat's tactics of delay continued. This led the PFLP to withdraw from a meeting with the Fatah Central Committee delegation. At that point, the council session entered its most severe dilemma. Palestinian leaders met for several hours without reaching results. Then seven members of Fatah's Central Committee applied pressure by threatening to appear before the council and «expose the lie of independent Palestinian decision-making.» In addition, the Algerian leadership exerted immense efforts to ensure the success of the council on the basis of adherence to the agreements previously reached. Yasir Arafat also received a message from the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, reaffirming the Soviet Union's urgings that the PLO achieve a unified position, and warning that the division of the PLO would be more dangerous than ever this time. Comrade Gorbachev affirmed that without the presence of independent Palestinian representation, the Soviet Union would not attend any international conference on the Middle East.

Finally, after all these efforts, the formula previously agreed on was reaffirmed, and unity was saved. Thus the PNC session was able to conclude by reestablishing Palestinian unity on the basis of a nationalist political and organizational program, which was presented to the council and adopted unanimously.

In the PNC's concluding session, Yasir Arafat announced the reunification of the Palestinian Liberation Front, thanking the Algerian leadership for the efforts it had expended to that end. The reunification was achieved after the work of an arbitration committee composed of Abu Ali Mustafa, Abu Jihad, Yasir Abed Rabbouh and Abdul Rahim Ahmed. It was agreed that Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Abbas) would represent the PLF in the PLO Executive Committee for a limited period, during which time Talat Yacoub would continue in his post as Secretary General of the PLF. The two factions agreed to convene a unification congress for the organization during that limited period.

# Press Conference

In a press conference held on May 7<sup>th</sup> in Damascus, Comrade George Habash answered questions pertaining to the last Palestinian National Council held in Algiers. Following are excerpts from that press conference.

## PRESS CONFERENCE WITH COMRADE HABASH

In answer to a question on a possible reconciliation between Yasir Arafat and Syria and the liability of Salvation Front member organizations joining the PLO's leadership, Comrade Habash answered:

«Despite our pride in the success of the PNC, we consider this success inadequate unless it is followed by consolidating relations between the PLO and Syria. This is because Syria is the only frontline country preparing to confront the Zionist enemy by achieving a strategic balance of power which the Syrians are always referring to. The Egyptian regime-not the Egyptian people - has surrendered to the Zionist invasion. Syria, however, declares and practices confrontation of the Zionist danger threatening the Arab nation. The sacrifices of the Syrian people and army made in defence of the Palestinian cause further underscores Syria's national stand. We therefore consider that all efforts must be exerted towards rectifying the relations between the PLO and Syria and towards restoring the natural alliance which existed through the seventies up till the Palestinian resistance leadership's evacuation from Beirut.

No matter how difficult it is, we, in the PFLP, along with the nationalist, progressive and socialist forces, on the Palestinian, Arab and international levels, will continue our efforts to remove the obstacles obstructing the path to the natural situation which should exist between the PLO and Syria.

As for the second part of your question, we in the PFLP, are within the framework of the PLO, which automatically means that we are outside the framework of the Salvation Front. It is natural, however, that contacts with the Salvation Front's member organiza-

tions will continue. Only when these member organizations join the PLO will Palestinian national unity be considered 100% accomplished.»

In another question, Comrade Habash was asked for his evaluation of his meeting with President Hafez Assad and about the essence of the dispute between Syria and the PLO. Comrade Habash answered:

«Ours is a relationship of friendship and respect. This relationship is based on the common political view of opposition to the Zionist danger to the Arab world. We are agreed on the impossibility of accepting this colonialist entity, the impossibility of recognizing it and the necessity of isolating it as a prelude to uprooting the Zionist danger from our region.

The long discussion which took place between President Assad and myself had to do with the PFLP's assessment of the PNC's political and organizational resolutions..... In short I was glad to hear from the president that what had happened in Algiers was considered positive; secondly, that this unification process should be followed by unifying all Palestinian organizations within the PLO.»

«As regards the relationship between the PLO and Syria the president conditioned it on the leadership's practices on the ground, because in the light of prior experiences great importance is attached to political practices which are in accordance with written agreements.. On the whole I can frankly say that I was relieved after our meeting given the complicated situation between the PLO and Syria during the past four years.»

Comrade Habash was then asked about what guarantees there were which would prevent Yasir Arafat from not abiding by the latest PNC resolutions. Comrade Habash:

«Through our representative in the PLO's Executive committee, we would ►

demand complete adherence to the resolutions and would intensify our struggle within the PLO to ensure adherence. For you to ask such a question, however, means that you overestimate Yasir Arafat's influence, because despite his apparent dissatisfaction with some of the resolutions, these resolutions were passed...»

In another question Comrade Habash was asked about statements

made by some PLO leaderships, especially those made by Arafat, which clearly reflect regret at adopting the resolution to sever relations with Egypt and whether this means that relations will eventually be restored if such overtures continue. In answer, Comrade Habash replied:

«We entered the PNC fully aware that such a problem would arise. We know that within this unity conflict will

continue between two political lines—therefore such statements following the PNC did not come as a surprise but were expected rather. However, we will confront this political trend from within the PLO. As for restoring relations with Egypt, such a decision is subject only to the resolutions of the PNC, especially those of the 16th session and not to statements made by anyone.»

# Document—Basis for Unity

This document, agreed on by six Palestinian organizations, formed part of the basis for the Palestinian national dialogue and the resulting PNC's decisions.

## POLITICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL AGREEMENT SIGNED BY SIX PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN TRIPOLI, LIBYA, CONCERNING THE UNITY OF THE PLO

After talks which took place from March 16th to 23rd, 1987, in Tripoli, Libya, six Palestinian organizations signed an agreement intended to be the basis for uniting the PLO. The six organizations are: the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Fatah - Revolutionary Council, PFLP -General Command, the Palestinian Liberation Front (PLF) and the Popular Struggle Front (PSF). Brother Muamer Qaddafi played a positive role in achieving this agreement. Following is the text of the agreement:

### POLITICAL ON THE PALESTINIAN LEVEL

1. To adhere to the Palestinian National Charter and the decisions of the legitimate sessions of the Palestine National Council (PNC), up to and including the 16th session.

2. To adhere to the political program of the PLO - the program of the right to repatriation, self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian land.

3. To consider the PLO the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people without delegating, mandating or sharing this representation; to continue the struggle by all methods, first and foremost the armed struggle; to denounce the Cairo declaration and work to open the Arab borders for the Palestinian resistance movement.

4. To reject all liquidationist plans such as the Camp David accords, the Reagan plan, self-rule (autonomy) and the joint administration plan.

5. To cancel the Amman accord of February 11, 1985, publicly and officially.

6. To adhere to the resolutions of the Arab summits, which were adopted by consensus, particularly the resolutions of the 1974 Rabat Summit and the 1978 Baghdad Summit.

7. To reject Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, because they ignore the rights of the Palestinian Arab people to repatriation, self-determination and the establishment of an

independent Palestinian state. They moreover consider the Palestinian cause to be only a refugee problem.

8. To stop political relations with the Egyptian regime as long as it abides by the Camp David accords. To consolidate relations with the Egyptian people and nationalist forces who are struggling against the normalization of relations and the treaty of conciliation with the Zionist enemy.

9. To develop all forms of coordination and joint action in the occupied territories, to close the ranks of the masses of our people and strengthen the nationalist institutions. By so doing, our masses will be more able to confront the Zionist occupation and acts of repression. They will be able to confront all attempts to create artificial, collaborationist alternatives to the PLO.

10. All Palestinian nationalist forces should act jointly to improve the organization of our camps in Lebanon, protect the unity of the fighters and defend these camps and their existence.

### ON THE ARAB LEVEL

1. To consolidate the militant Palestinian-Syrian alliance, to develop the fraternal relations and alliance between the PLO and Syria. These relations should be based on joint struggle against the imperialist-Zionist plans and the liquidationist solutions.

2. To strengthen the relations of alliance with the forces and organizations of the Arab national liberation movement.

3. To consolidate the alliance between the PLO and the Arab nationalist and progressive regimes (Libya, Algeria, Democratic Yemen and Syria).

4. To consolidate the Palestinian-Lebanese alliance. To develop this alliance with the Lebanese nationalists' struggle to liberate occupied Lebanese land, to defeat the hegemonic plans of the Phalangists, to guarantee the liberty, independence and Arab identity of Lebanon, and to guarantee the victory of the nationalist project.

5. To regulate the relations between the Palestinian revolution and the Lebanese nationalist forces, aimed at safeguarding the security and safety of our masses and camps, protecting their civil and social rights, and guaranteeing their organizational and political rights; to protect the masses' right to carry arms and join the ranks of the Palestinian revolution.

6. To support Arab solidarity. This solidarity should be based on adhering to the national struggle against Zionism and 'Israel', confronting the imperialist and liquidationist plans, and supporting the Palestinian people's struggle for their inalienable national rights, first and foremost their rights to repatriation, self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

7. The PLO's relations with Arab states should be based on mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs.

## INTERNATIONAL

1. The PLO is an integral part of the Arab and international liberation movement. It is thus deeply concerned to develop and consolidate cooperation and alliance with the socialist countries, first and foremost the Soviet Union.

2. The PLO supports the convening of an international conference to solve the Middle East crisis, the essence of which is the Palestinian cause. The PLO should participate in such a conference on an independent and equal footing with the other parties. This conference will block partial and unilateral solutions. It will be based on the Soviet initiative of July 29, 1984.

3. To cooperate with the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organization of African Unity and the Organization of the Islamic Conference; to support the struggle against the forces of imperialism, Zionism and racism in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

4. Together with the armed struggle, the political and mass struggle should be escalated. In so doing, the Palestinian revolution will be able to gain broader support from the public opinion and states of the world, to the rights of the Palestinian people to repatriation, self-determination and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, and broader support to the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

## ORGANIZATIONAL THE PNC

To end all manifestations of individualism in the PLO's decision-making; to develop the PLO into a real national front led by a collective leadership which is honest and committed to the national political line. This front should abide by democracy in principle. The following changes are to be made:

1. To expand the presidium of the PNC.

2. All organizations have the right to membership in the PNC, including the Uprising Movement, Fatah - Revolutionary Council and the Palestinian Communist Party. Those organizations with the same names should change their names. If possible, these organizations should unite. Any attempt to unite one or more organizations should be encouraged. The different organizations' representatives in the national dialogue will be named later on.

3. To amend the basic statute of the PLO to include all reforms agreed upon.

## CENTRAL COUNCIL

1. The Central Council shall be elected directly by the PNC and from among its members, according to the PNC's internal regulations.

2. The Central Council shall have decision-making power.

3. The Central Council shall be empowered to hold the members of the Executive Committee accountable for implementing its decisions. It has the right to suspend Executive Com-

mittee members, not to exceed one-third of the committee's membership.

4. The council shall form ad hoc committees from among its own members. These committees should play an effective role and be formed on the basis of front work.

5. A set of internal regulations should govern the work of the Central Council. They will be considered part and parcel of the basic statute.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

1. All organizations and forces who are members of the PNC have the right to membership in the Executive Committee.

2. The Executive Committee shall elect vice-chairmen whose responsibilities and tasks shall be detailed in the Executive Committee's internal regulations.

3. A general secretariat shall be formed to serve as a collective leadership responsible for implementing decisions on a daily basis on all organizational, political, financial and military questions, between two meetings of the Executive Committee. The number of the secretariat's members should not exceed one-third of the Executive Committee's membership.

4. The Executive Committee shall form ad hoc committees from among its own members. These committees shall supervise political affairs, the affairs of the occupied territories and the policy for supporting steadfastness and Lebanon.

5. The PNC shall agree upon a set of internal regulations for the Executive Committee, which will become part of the PLO's statute.

## MASS ORGANIZATIONS

1. To preserve the unity of the mass organizations, to activate their role among the masses and consolidate democratic procedures in their work.

2. To reunite the mass organizations according to their statutes and internal regulations.

## PLO DEPARTMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS

1. To reorganize the PLO's departments, institutions and missions on a democratic basis, taking into consideration qualifications and adherence to the national cause.

2. The Executive Committee shall form an ad hoc committee to study the conditions of the PLO's departments, offices, missions and institutions. The work of this committee should guarantee the efficiency of the work in accordance with clause (1). This committee shall present its recommendations to the Executive Committee.

## OTHER MATTERS

A. The next session of the PNC shall be considered a unification session. Its membership shall be based on the membership of the 16th session. Some members shall be changed. Others shall be added provided that they are accepted by the representatives of the organizations, mass organizations and nationalist personalities who participate in the national dialogue. Democracy shall govern the mass organizations' representation in the PNC.

B. This formation shall be considered the formation of the 17th PNC, the first session of which shall be called the unification session.

# Occupied Palestine

## Land Day Portrait of Struggle

By the time this issue reaches you, the 11th anniversary of Land Day, on March 30th, will have passed. Throughout these eleven years, the memory of Land Day has been converted into the symbol of the dialectical relationship between the Palestinian people, their land, cause and revolution.

On Land Day, the Palestinian masses, especially those in the area of Palestine occupied in 1948, confirm their rejection of the Zionist occupation, and their adherence to the PLO and its national program. This is of particular importance now in view of the PLO's difficulties and the brutal experiences inflicted on the Palestinians in the camps in Lebanon by the Zionists' counterpart, Amal. That the masses still stand up and protest, and uphold their national traditions, despite the critical situation, strengthens conviction in the inevitability of the Palestinian revolution's victory.

The 1976 Land Day uprising was the culmination of a series of popular uprisings against the numerous attempts of the Zionist authorities to eradicate Palestinian national identity in the territories occupied in 1948. The declaration of the so-called «development of the Galilee» project precipitated the confrontation between the Zionists and the Palestinian peasants, leaving in its trail six Palestinian martyrs and scores of wounded, whose memory is forever marked by Land Day. This «development» project was a long-term plan intended to change the demographic structure of the Galilee, by setting up eight industrial settlements. With attractive economic incentives to Israeli settlers, the Zionist administration expected to convert the Galilee's Palestinian majority into a Zionist settler majority.

All through 1975-76, the Palestinians used all methods in their power to make the Zionist authorities reconsider this project which meant the confiscation of 20,000 dunums of Palestinian land and the eviction of hundreds of families. The masses' efforts culminated in the heroic confrontation of March 30th, which was a genuine expression of their adherence to their national identity and cause. Demonstrations and strikes in

the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip reciprocated this expression of unity.

As a result of the bitter struggle between the Palestinians and the Zionist authorities, the pace of this plan's implementation was reduced; the land of one Palestinian village was returned to the legal Palestinian owners. However, the occupation authorities continue to pursue their policies of land confiscation, using various ploys to evict Palestinians and demoralize them. Still, the Palestinians continue to commemorate Land Day and to struggle in the occupied territories and in exile, despite repeated sacrifices. The facts attest to their determination to struggle to this very day. As a result of this struggle, 900 Palestinians were arrested in occupied Palestine between June and August 1985, leading to problems of overcrowding in the Zionist jails. Between 1967 and 1985, 87% of Palestinian youth were arrested at least once. Curfews were imposed 3,027 times. Palestinians camps and villages were closed off 1,624 times. A total of 9,236 directives were issued for closing down shops, schools and pharmacies. A total of 13,317 homes were demolished, and 52% of the land of the West Bank has been confiscated.

### 1987 PREPARATIONS

Despite decades of repression, Land Day 1987 was planned and organized with undoused enthusiasm and determination. Rallies, demonstrations and strikes were organized in all areas by the Committee of the Heads of Local Arab Councils and the Committee for the Defense of the Land in the Triangle, Galilee and Naqab (Negev).

Preparing for Land Day, Palestinians from villages in the Triangle and Galilee protested the Zionist policies of racism and Judaization. The most prominent demonstration took place in Kafr Qasim, protesting the demolition

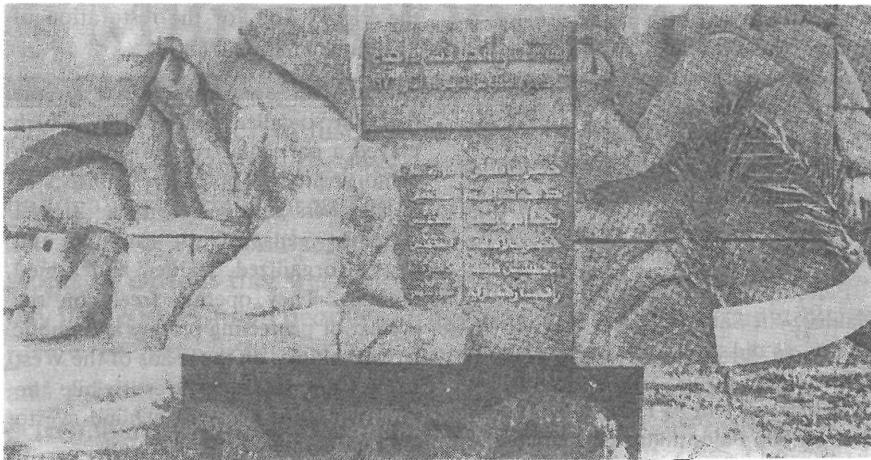
of a Palestinian home under the pretext that it was built without a permit. Palestinian nationalist figures participated in this demonstration: Tawfiq Zayyad, mayor of Nazareth, and Tawfiq Toubi (of Rakah). The citizens of Kafr Qasim helped to rebuild the demolished house, and replanted the trees that had been uprooted. In Ain Mahil, on the outskirts of Nazareth, there was a march to protest the bulldozing of the 320 dunums of land left to this village. This bulldozing is the preliminary step towards annexing this land to the nearby Zionist settlement, Upper Nazareth.

The Committee of the Heads of Local Arab Councils and the Committee for the Defense of the Land issued a statement calling on all Palestinians to adhere to the decisions for strikes and sit-ins, and to attend the planned rallies. Palestinian youth in all areas of the occupied homeland distributed handbills and painted slogans on the walls, calling on all to participate.

### ZIONIST ALERT

The Zionist border police and army were mobilized in anticipation of Land Day activities. A military directive was issued ordering the closure of all West Bank and Gaza schools, universities and colleges for three days, starting March 29th, to minimize the possibility for Palestinians to gather and launch demonstrations and other nationalist activities. On the West Bank, occupation troops stormed Bir Zeit University and arrested students for interrogation. Others received warnings. Zionist military presence was reinforced in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, where border patrol units set up checkpoints on roads and at religious, nationalist and union institutions. Similar precautionary measures were taken in Nablus, Hebron (Al Khalil), Jenin, Qalqilia, Ramallah, Duheisheh and Jalazon camps, and the Jericho area.

In the Gaza Strip, the occupation forces erected additional structures on school walls, making them eight to ten meters high, with the schools looking more like detention centers. The Zionist authorities' justification was preventing school children from throwing stones at military patrols from the playground.



Monument of Land Day martyrs.

## DEATH IN ZIONIST PRISON

On April 6th, it was reported that Tariq Yasin Hashim Al Hamouri, 24 year old Palestinian, died in Ramleh prison. Tariq was an engineering student at a university in the USA, who had returned to his homeland, occupied Palestine, over a year ago. There he was arrested and sentenced to three years imprisonment on charges of «threatening national security.» He had served one and a half years when he died. His family lives in Kuwait. He was buried late at night with only a few family members present, on the orders of the Zionist authorities.

## HOME DESTRUCTION

Jamil Ali Mattar, head of an eight-member family, from Jabal Al Mukabir in Jerusalem, destroyed his three-room house due to a Zionist court ruling that it was built without a permit. The court had given him two choices: Either he could destroy his home himself, or the municipality would do it for him, in which event he would have to pay the equivalent of \$500.



Palestinian flag raised in Ummel Fahm.



The occupation authorities also launched a broad arrest campaign, piling up new inmates for Ansar 2 detention center. Patrols were increased in Gaza city, Rafah, Shatti, Jabalia camp and others. The General Inspector of Israeli Police David Kraus stated, «Israeli reinforcements have been increased in the Galilee, Triangle and more markedly in Jerusalem.»

## MARCH 30TH

On the morning of March 30th, demonstrations and strikes erupted in all major Palestinian cities and camps, and most villages. The Zionist authorities issued a radio call for Palestinians not to join the strikes and demonstrations. However, the ineffectiveness of this call was seen in the reports of clashes, curfews and arrests that filtered through in the media.

Regular daily life came to a halt as people went on strike. Schools and shops alike closed down, as Palestinians prepared for the marches in Araba and Nazareth, in the Galilee, Um Al Fahm and Rahat (Naqab). In Kaboul, in the Triangle, the Palestinian flag was hoisted to honor Land Day. The strike spread through Al Tireh, Kafr Qasim, Taibeh, Arara, Jerusalem ►

and the West Bank. In vain, the Zionist police tried to force shopkeepers to reopen their shops; a number of youths were arrested for distributing handbills. In the Zionist jails, 1,500 Palestinian prisoners joined in the hunger strike that had begun the week before in the prisons of Nablus, Jenin, Ashkelon and others.

There were numerous clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and the Zionist police and border patrol throughout the occupied territories. Demonstrations were particularly militant in Tulkarim and in the West Bank refugee camps of Balata, Duheisheh and Al Amari. The Zionist forces, armed with machine guns, confronted angry demonstrators with tear gas and clubs. Palestinians began throwing everything they could lay their hands on against the enemy. Slingshots were used to hurl pieces of metal at Zionist soldiers. The Israeli newspaper, *Hadashot*, reported demonstrators in Balata using slingshots, noting that scores of Palestinians had used this 'weapon'. In Balata, two Palestinian youth sustained bullet wounds in their legs when a Zionist soldier shot at them.

In Al Bireh, north of Jerusalem, a soldier was wounded as was another near Nablus. In a demonstration near Qalandia, a 12 year old boy was arrested for burning tires in the street. In the Gaza Strip, two Palestinian youths were wounded when the Zionist forces shot indiscriminately, trying to suppress a demonstration in Jabalia camp.

Palestinians demonstrated in the Galilee - in Sakhnin, Deir Hanna and Araba, as did thousands in the Naqab. A prominent display of popular protest took place in Um Al Fahm where more than 30,000 Palestinians participated in a demonstration against Zionist occupation, to commemorate Land Day. Israeli flags were burnt and Palestinian flags hoisted in their stead. Knesset member Moshe Arens described this as a «dangerous act» and a number of Palestinians were consequently arrested.

In another prominent demonstration, 20,000 Palestinians marched from Sakhnin to Araba, singing the Palestinian national anthem and other patriotic songs. A large number of marchers voiced support for Dr. George Habash, Secretary General of

the PFLP, and for the restoration of Palestinian national unity.

The true danger, however, came from the so-called 'special army' which played a particular role in suppressing demonstrators. This 'army' consists of 80 members gathered from the Zionist extremist gangs, Gush Emunim and Kach - organized, trained and armed fanatics. They operate freely on the pretext of protecting private and public Israeli vehicles on the roads of the West Bank from stone throwers, while the Zionist authorities turn a blind eye to their harassment of Palestinians.

The Zionist authorities imposed curfews on Duheisheh and Balata camps, arresting more than 70 Palestinians for throwing stones at military vehicles. Similarly, seven students were arrested from the Islamic College in Al Khalil, and the campaign of curfews, closures and arrests continued well past Land Day. Bethlehem University was closed down till April 6th. Two secondary schools in Beit Sahour and Al Khader, near Jerusalem, were also closed, while five students from the former were arrested. Balata and Duheisheh camps remained under curfew well into the first week of April. On April 6th, the guardians of 120 students of Salfil school in Tulkarim were ordered to meet with the military governor, and forced to sign statements guaranteeing that they would not allow their children to demonstrate in the future.

Commemoration of Land Day was not confined to Palestinians in the occupied homeland. Palestinians in Kuwait, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Libya, Syria, Lebanon, Democratic Yemen, the Gulf states, Moscow, the United States and other places celebrated this occasion in a unique expression of unity in the common cause. Everywhere slogans were raised such as «No to autonomy,» «No to the Jordanian regime,» «Death to collaborators,» «Down with the Amman Accord» and «Yes to the PLO - sole, legitimate representative» - clearly indicating wide-spread awareness of the national struggle. Highly significant was the slogan raised during a demonstration held by roughly one hundred students at Yarmouk University in Jordan, scene of the bloody massacre of 34 students a year ago. The students raised the slogan: «Liberate Palestine by armed struggle.»

## Mass Resistance

In the first two weeks of April, there were repeated demonstrations in the occupied territories, in solidarity with the political prisoners' hunger strike, as well as stone throwing against Israeli vehicles. In the occupied Golan Heights, hundreds of residents clashed with the Israeli police after Zionists blew up the statue of Sultan Atrash, historical leader of the anti-colonial struggle in Syria. Israeli policemen were injured in the clash in Majdel Shams.

On April 11th, an Israeli settler was killed in a fire bomb attack. Zionist settlers went on a rampage in the nearby Palestinian town, Qalqilia, smashing windows and burning orchards. Qalqilia's mayor reported that 20 Palestinian homes and six cars were damaged. Palestinians in the towns and camps of the area started a series of protests against the settlers' violence, while the military authorities clamped a curfew on Qalqilia, and bulldozed three rows of orange trees on each side of the road where the attack had occurred.

In the early hours of April 13th, dozens of Bir Zeit University students were arrested, nine of them held under administrative detention. This did not stop a thousand students from demonstrating at the university later that day, protesting the settlers' rampage and reiterating solidarity with Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike. Zionist soldiers opened fire on the demonstrators, killing Musa Hanafi, a 22 year old history student from the Gaza Strip, and wounding three others. The university was ordered closed for four months, and curfews were imposed on several West Bank towns and camps. Still, protests continued the next days throughout the West Bank. In the occupied Gaza Strip, residents of Rafah, home of the martyr, demonstrated in protest of murder. The military authorities imposed a curfew, as Minister of War Rabin vowed a general crackdown on Palestinian resistance.



# Military Operations

The forward motion of history has produced the philosophy that the colonialists' terror and oppression of a people struggling for their national rights only forms fertile ground for the seeds of resistance. The truth of this philosophy has been proven by the experiences of scores of nations that were subject to colonialism. It is evidenced today in the Palestinian people's struggle against Zionist occupation. A review of recent military operations, along with the mass uprising and prisoners' hunger strike (see articles in this issue), proves the determination of the Palestinian people to rid the land of oranges of the Zionist occupiers.

## MARCH

There were 16 military operations in occupied Palestine during the month of March, resulting in the death of four Zionist soldiers and settlers, eight wounded and at least two missing. In addition, at least five Israeli military vehicles were totally destroyed.

The operations were distributed all over Palestine. In occupied Jerusalem, there were three operations, resulting in the death or wounding of at least four Zionist soldiers. In the occupied West Bank, seven operations were conducted, leaving one Zionist soldier dead and three military vehicles destroyed, according to the occupation authorities' estimates. In the occupied Gaza Strip, three operations were carried out; five soldiers were injured and one killed; a military car and bus were destroyed. Three operations occurred in the part of Palestine occupied in 1948; two Zionist soldiers were killed and one is missing.

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## METHODS OF STRUGGLE

A variety of methods were employed to attack the occupation forces. Of the 16 operations in March, four were carried out using explosive charges, four by molotov cocktails, four by kidnap-

ping and executing Zionist soldiers, two by knife-stabbing, one hand grenade attack, and one by ramming a car into a gathering of Zionists. Given that using knives, explosives, molotov cocktails and hand grenades is commonplace in attacking the enemy, it is noteworthy that the operations of March included two other types:

First: the kidnapping and execution of Zionist soldiers. This is not a totally new method, but it was prominent during March, causing the most casualties among the Zionists. Such operations also cause great disturbance to the Zionist soldiers, settlers and authorities, a fact which was apparent in the Israeli and international press. Three soldiers were kidnapped and killed, while two others are still missing, without a trace. Israeli television announced that two of the dead soldiers were found in the western sector of Jerusalem. The third, Ami Ben Yehoud, 37 years old, was found in Tel Aviv. The Israeli radio acknowledged that he was a secret police agent. The missing soldiers are Rubin Centerman from Nicher settlement near Haifa (missing since March 19th), and David Buanch who left his house in Ashkelon in early March.

Second: ramming vehicles into gatherings of soldiers. Although only one such operation was carried out in March, it showed great bravery. The fact that it is the third such operation in the recent period indicates that this is a growing trend in resisting the occupation and inflicting casualties on the enemy. On October 21, 1986, a Palestinian truck driver rammed into a military bus station, leaving behind five dead soldiers and 13 wounded. The driver escaped unharmed. On February 18th, a Palestinian taxi driver hit two soldiers near Askar camp, wounding them. The taxi driver was martyred when Zionist soldiers opened fire. On March 17th, a Palestinian-driven car crashed into a military police vehicle in Gaza, wounding five Zionists seriously. The driver managed to escape. These operations led the Israeli press to question whether they form a new type of attack similar to those in South Lebanon.

Among other outstanding operations in March were two stabbings. On March 17th, a unit of the PFLP stabbed and seriously wounded two Zionists in the Arab market in the old Musrarah quarter of Jerusalem. On March 10th, ►

The three Palestinian martyrs of the April 18th military operation.



secondary school students in Jenin, in the West Bank, stabbed a Zionist soldier as he attempted to storm the school with his soldiers.

## COMPARISON

Comparing the number of operations carried out in March with those of February, it is apparent that there was a decline in frequency, but a significant rise in Zionist casualties. In February, there were 37 operations, leaving one Zionist dead and 23 wounded. In March, 16 operations left four Zionists dead, eight wounded and two missing. The decline in the number of operations can be explained in connection with two factors. One is that military activities in occupied Palestine often come in waves. Second is that the Zionist forces imposed a state of alert and especially tight security measures in March, in anticipation of Land Day. All in all, the operations carried out in March were courageous and of high quality, causing more casualties to the Zionists than in the previous month.

## APRIL

On April 5th, there was an explosion on the Haifa-Acca road in the part of Palestine occupied in 1948. In the oc-

cupied West Bank, there were six molotov cocktail attacks on Zionist targets in the first twelve days of the month - in Jenin, Ramallah, Tulkarim, Halhoul, Tubas and near Qalqilia. In the attack near Qalqilia, an Israeli settler was killed when a molotov cocktail exploded inside the car she was traveling in from her house in Alfi Minache settlement. Six other passengers were wounded. This sparked a chain of barbaric acts by settler thugs who burned orchards and attacked Palestinians in Qalqilia.

On April 17, three molotov cocktails were thrown at an Israeli patrol near Khan Younis in the Gaza Strip. The occupation authorities have ordered the construction of walls up to ten meters high, around Palestinian camps in the occupied territories, a decision taken after molotov cocktails and stones were repeatedly thrown at Israeli military patrols. Al Jalazon camp, near Ramallah, has already been encircled with such walls, while they are being built around Duheisheh camp, near Bethlehem.

The Israeli daily *Yediot Achronot* reported that an Israeli soldier, Arik Albertz, 20 years old, had not been seen

or heard of since April 1st, when he left his house in Asdod, bound for his military base in the Golan Heights.

On April 18th, a three-man Palestinian commando group succeeded in crossing a minefield and electronic fence to enter northern Palestine. The revolutionaries ambushed a Zionist patrol, inflicting heavy casualties in the ranks of the soldiers. According to Israeli reports, the electronic fence alerted the Zionists, and a military patrol chased the commandos. A battle ensued between the settlements of Manara and Yieftah, a few kilometers south of Khalsa in the Upper Galilee. An Israeli military spokesman claimed that all three of the commandos were killed, while saying that an Israeli lieutenant and another soldier died. This was the second cross-border attack since July 1986, when a PFLP-SSNP unit succeeded in reaching northern Palestine, clashing with Zionist troops and inflicting heavy casualties in their ranks. General Yosi Peled, commander of the northern front, stated that an increase in operations in the «security zone» (South Lebanon) and North Palestine should be expected.

# Hunger Strike in Zionist Jails

«We think that all this will soon end...» That's what the spokesman for the Zionist prison administration told the French Press Agency after the start of the hunger strike by Palestinian revolutionaries on March 25th. However, the strike lasted 20 days, disproving the Zionists' forecasts.

More than 4,500 Palestinian militants in 14 prisons went on strike, protesting the cruel prison conditions and the physical and psychological torture to which they are subjected. The strike was decided on when the prison administration tightened its iron fist after the appointment of a new director, David Maimon in December 1986, replacing Rafi Suissa. Maimon set about revoking the rights Palestinian prisoners had achieved through long struggles and great sacrifices, accusing his predecessor of «compromising major principles in seeking calm in the prisons.»

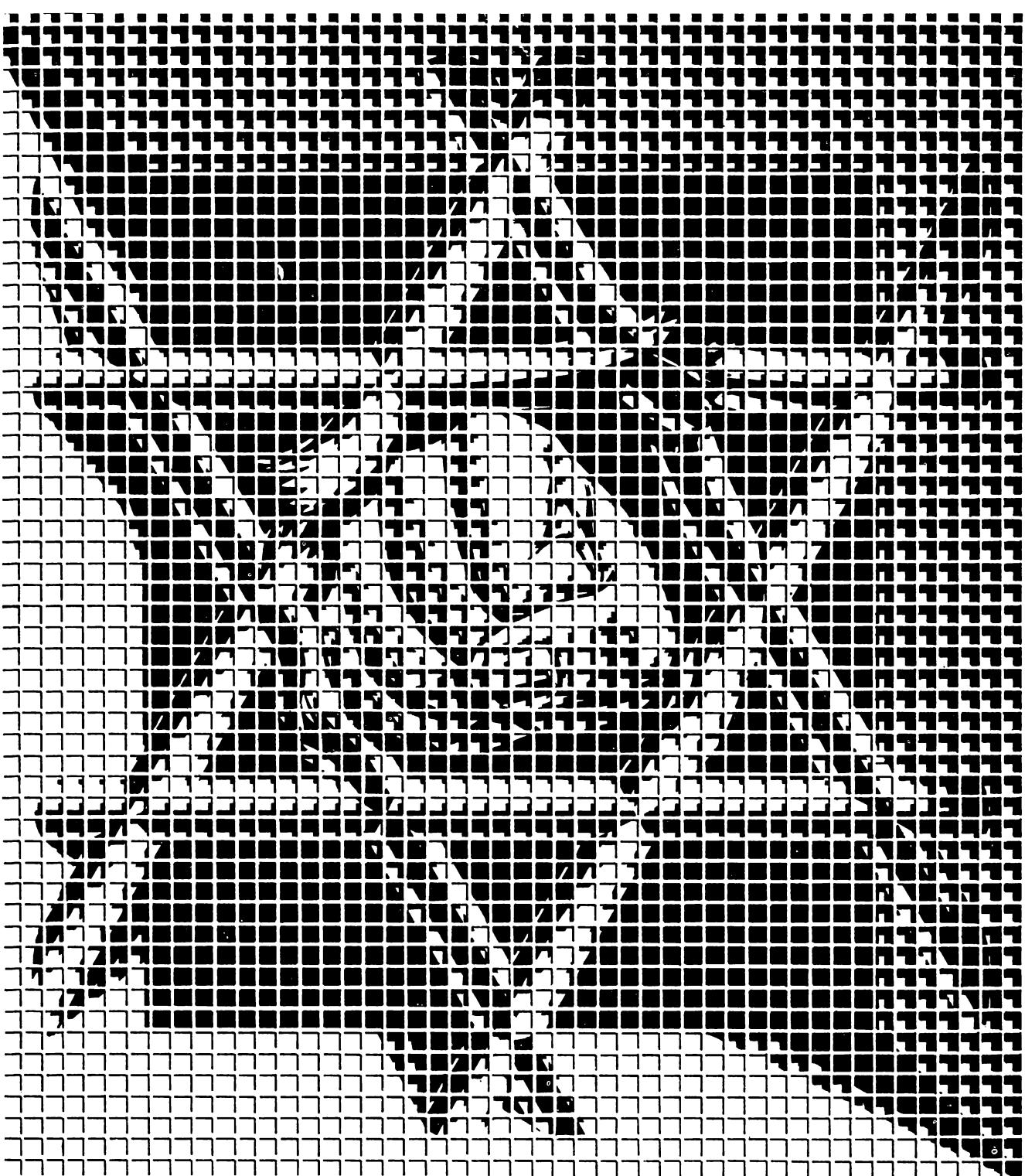
Maimon is known for his hatred of Arabs. He has played a big role in ter-

rorizing the Palestinian and Lebanese people, as military governor of the occupied Gaza Strip, and participant in the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. As prison director, he is empowered to organize the prisons and deal with the prisoners as he sees fit. Maimon is also known for his sadism and propensity to use violence. These qualities can be attributed to his inferiority complex as an Oriental Jew, a community that is treated as second-class citizens in the Zionist state. He therefore aspires to exercise power over the Palestinians to show his loyalty to the Zionist leaders who are mostly of western origin.

The current hunger strike is a test of strength between the strikers and the

prison administration. It is the biggest since the 1980 hunger strike in Nafha, when two Palestinian revolutionaries were martyred and scores seriously injured by prison guards in an attempt to force-feed the prisoners and break the strike. The current strike was started on March 25th by over 1,000 militants in the prisons of Nablus, Jenin, Ashkelon and Kfar Youna. Soon more joined in, bringing the number of strikers up to over 4,500 in 14 prisons.

The strikers demanded the reduction of overcrowding in the cells where a prisoner is confined in an area of less than 2.5 square meters, as opposed to six square meters per prisoner in Europe, a fact which Maimon himself



acknowledges. The strikers also demanded to receive books, newspapers and letters from their families. They demanded medical treatment, improved ventilation, removal of the asbestos sheets from the windows to let in air and sunlight, extension of the daily break in the prison yard, improvement in the quality of food, recognition of their chosen representatives and a stop to inhuman practices such as torture, solitary confinement, search raids, the spraying of

poisonous gas and tear gas, etc.

In early April, three Palestinian prisoners presented a complaint against Maimon to the Israeli Supreme Court, and demanded daily doctors' visits. The three said that since March 25th, not one doctor had visited the strikers who would suffer greatly if not treated soon.

#### PRESS CONFERENCE

On April 12th, a press conference was held in Jerusalem in solidarity with the striking prisoners. A large number

of progressive Israelis attended, as well as Palestinian lawyers, journalists, detainees' families, representatives of nationalist organizations and recently released prisoners. Among the speakers was Meir Vilner who had just visited Jnaid prison with a delegation of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, meeting six prisoners. Vilner told how the prisoners had explained the worsening of the situation after

Maimon's appointment. He said that 70 prisoners had presented a complaint about torture, and that the strikers' morale was high.

The progressive Israeli lawyer Lea Tsemel spoke on behalf of the Committee to Defend Prisoners, confirming that a large number of prisoners were continuing the strike, and that a strike had started in Nafha prison. Palestinian lawyer Walid Fahoum, president of the Committee of Friends of the Prisoners, spoke of the Zionist practices in Jnайд. He added that on April 11th, 140 prisoners in Ramallah prison had joined the hunger strike. The lawyer Abdul Rahman Abu Nasr spoke about Ansar II prison in Gaza, where scores of prisoners have become sick, and the minimal living conditions are absent.

Tawfiq Toubi of Rakah said that despite the authorities' attempts to impose a news black-out on the strike in the first days, the strikers were determined to continue their struggle for the sake of their lives and dignity.

## ZIONIST STRIKE—BREAKING

The Zionists attempted to play down the strike and the prisoners' demands from the start. One day after the strike started, the prison administration claimed that it was a 'seasonal' strike dictated by hostile, external forces, and that the strikers had ended their fast. Maimon insisted that he would not «allow the security prisons to become a school for the fedayeen», or kneel to the prisoners' politically motivated demands. Speaking to Israeli radio, Police Minister Haim Bar Lev claimed that the prisoners had staged the strike due to disappointment at not being exchanged with the four hostages in Lebanon.

Over one week after the start of the strike, the prison administration claimed that the prisons were calm and that the prisoners were under medical supervision. It threatened that if the prisoners continued their strike, they might be deprived of all 'privileges'. The administration admitted that, upon directions from Maimon and in co-ordination with the police minister, steps had been taken to eliminate organiza-

tional activities in the prisons; prisoners were prohibited from moving between cells and sections of the prison. Maimon declared that he would not recognize any representatives of the prisoners.

## SOLIDARITY PROTESTS

In support of the strikers, demonstrations erupted on April 2nd in the occupied West Bank. The Israeli army tried to disperse these by shooting in the air and arresting many demonstrators. Meanwhile, families of prisoners staged a sit-in at the Red Cross offices in Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethlehem and Nablus. Women's organizations called on humanitarian and juridical organizations, Arab and international, to intervene in support of the prisoners' just demands.

There were demonstrations in Balata camp near Nablus, in support of the striking prisoners. In Dura, near Hebron, the occupation forces brutally prevented students from demonstrating. In Askar camp, demonstrators stoned military vehicles and the occupation forces opened fire on them. In Beit Sahour, the people woke up to find slogans covering the walls, calling for solidarity with the striking revolutionaries and condemning the prison administration.

On April 7th, the occupation troops opened fire on demonstrators in Ramallah, injuring one person according to the Israeli military spokesman who claimed that the demonstrators had attempted to grab the pistol of an officer. Shops closed down in protest of the Zionists' atrocities against Palestinian prisoners. Students at the Polytechnical Institute in Hebron went on strike in support of the prisoners, erecting barricades and stoning military vehicles. The occupation forces threw tear gas bombs to disperse them. The Palestinian Press Office in Jerusalem reported that the Zionist forces stormed the institute, confiscating books and documents. This office also reported that Zionist settler gangs had blocked roads leading to Halhoul, and broken the windows of a number of houses in the town.

Demonstrations and sit-ins continued in support of the striking prisoners. The occupation authorities imposed curfews

on Ramallah, Tulkarem and Duheisheh camp, after the April 9th demonstrations where five persons were wounded, including one Israeli. A spokeswoman for the occupation troops said that the curfew on Ramallah was imposed after a molotov cocktail was thrown at a settler's car. Settlers opened fire on a group of youth in Ramallah. In Al Bireh, settler thugs went on a rampage, looting, breaking windows and damaging cars.

## UNITY IN STRUGGLE

The prisoners ended their strike on April 13th, after some of their demands were met, and the prison administration had promised to look into the other demands. On April 16th, Maimon, who initially refused to recognize the prisoners' representatives, met with such representatives in Jnайд prison. However, according to the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, the police minister is still forbidding visits to the prisons.

The strike and the broad popular support it generated revitalized Palestinian unity in confronting the plans of the prison administration, that aimed at breaking this same unity and strength. The Zionists were counting on the fact that the great majority of prisoners today are relatively young and unexperienced, after the 1985 prisoner exchange liberated over 1,000 veteran militants. However, this strike disproved the Zionists' calculations. Palestinian prisoners showed that they are no less capable than their predecessors. The experience accumulated in the struggle against occupation is not confined to any one group. It has become part of all the Palestinian masses' struggle.

The scope of the Palestinian prisoners' confrontation against the occupation alerts all Palestinian nationalist forces to the need for upgrading support to the prisoners' struggle, and working for a broad international solidarity campaign. Such a campaign could help to pressure the Zionist authorities to back down from their fascist practices against imprisoned Palestinian militants. It would expose the Zionist propaganda which tries to gloss over the ugly picture of its occupation in the face of international public opinion.

# Highlights of Palestinian Struggle

## The Fedayeen Rule the Gaza Strip

The revolutionary experience accumulated in struggle is one if not *the* most valuable asset of the people striving for freedom. In occupied Palestine, armed struggle is the fundamental form whereby revolutionary vanguards confront the Zionist enemy. The experience gained through the practice of armed struggle should be documented and shared with our friends around the world. This article was compiled through discussions with comrade Hassan, a Palestinian militant who participated actively in the armed struggle against the Zionist troops in the first years after the 1967 occupation of the Gaza Strip. We hereby continue the series begun in the last issue of *Democratic Palestine* with the accounts of the 1976 hunger strike in Ashkelon prison and of a woman's participation in the resistance in the Gaza Strip. We plan to continue articles about highlights of Palestinian struggle in coming issues. Below comrade Hassan tells his story:

I was born in 1951, one year before President Nasser's revolution in Egypt. (The Gaza Strip was at that time under Egyptian administration). I was brought up in a patriotic environment. Some of my relatives were in the Arab National Movement (to which the PFLP traces its roots). At school, we were taken to visit the tomb of the unknown soldier (a Palestinian who fell in the 1959 Israeli-British-French attack on Egypt). We also participated in the lectures and political activities organized by the Arab National Movement. Such was the atmosphere until 1967, at which time I was 16 years old and in the 9th grade. Prior to the 1967 war, there were preparations that the masses participated in, helping the Egyptian army. We would go and help the army fortify its positions. During the work, we heard the government radio broadcasts which made people believe that a liberation war was coming. I was anxious for the war to break out so we could return to Palestine.

### GAZA ATTACKED

When the war started, my father was in Khan Younis, 25 km away from Jabalia camp where we lived. He had to walk that distance to reach us. The Zionist army went into the Sinai first, and then returned to conquer the Gaza Strip. They started their bombardment. Jabalia was bombed fiercely. It was the first bombing I had ever witnessed. Our house was hit by two bombs. My father was killed and nearly all the family sustained injuries. I was injured in the leg. My brother, mother and one year old nephew were injured. My aunt was pregnant; she was hit and gave birth prematurely. My uncle's wife who had come to our house for shelter was killed. After the raid I was bleeding, and one of our neighbors came to the house and took me to the hospital. The hospital was only equipped for first aid, and there were about fifty of us there.

The Zionists came to the hospital looking for soldiers. It was the first time in my life I had seen any Jews. They looked at us. When they were sure that we were all injured civilians, they left. We thought they were going to murder us. They ordered us transported to the hospital in Gaza city. The most serious cases were selected, and I was among them. The convoy was surrounded by the occupation forces' vehicles. At the hospital, I was asked if I would accept having my foot amputated. I

replied that I would prefer death. The doctors' policy was making amputations to reduce the work load.

My mother used to come and visit me in the hospital. She had to walk 30 km because civilian transportation had been halted by the occupation forces. That meant that my nine brothers and sisters, six of them younger than me, were left alone. Though her back had been injured, my mother refused to be hospitalized, because she wanted to take care of the family, especially since my father had been killed. We had to bury him in the yard of the house - that was the only option during the war.

I left the hospital after four months. My family had been forced to move to another house, and our situation was very difficult. My father had been a worker before his martyrdom. My brother was a policeman, but he quit his job after the occupation, so he was unemployed. The UNRWA allowed new examinations after the occupation, so I took my 9th grade exams and passed.

### RESISTANCE GROWS

In 1968, the Palestinian resistance began military operations against the Zionist forces in the Gaza Strip. After our experience of defeat and occupation, the sound of each bullet was like a shout of salvation. Our knowledge that the enemy was suffering losses raised our morale greatly. I used to imagine the fedayeen (resistance fighters) as men of iron. By this time, the Arab National Movement had been restructured, its radical Palestinian forces having formed the PFLP. Nobody knew the identity of the fedayeen, not even their own families. I hoped to see a fedayee, so that I could help him and thus join the resistance. At that time, a friend asked me to join the Palestinian Students' Union which was a secret organization; its activities were limited to distributing handbills and staging strikes. A friend brought a hand grenade and asked me to help start a strike. Our plan was to throw the grenade in the market to cause the shops to close down, signalling a strike. We threw the grenade and the shops closed, but the father of one of our friends was injured.

I found out that a friend of mine was in the Popular Liberation Forces (PLF), the guerrilla wing of the PLO's Palestine Liberation Army. Then I realized that the fedayee was one of ►

us. Those carrying out the military operations were people from among us, who in the day time went about their normal life. This friend used to come sleep at our house. He began to ask me for small favors - to expect him at night, to have tea prepared, etc. After a time, he was arrested, and we lost contact.

My friend and I used to sit in front of the school canteen and talk about the fedayeen. At that time, the Zionist authorities began issuing permits for people from the Gaza Strip to go and work in the part of Palestine occupied in 1948. At night my friends and I went out acting as fedayeen and collecting these permits to keep people from working in the Zionist state. We were enthusiastic even though such activities could expose us to death.

In that period, a friend said he wanted to introduce me to one of his relatives. We set a date at the canteen and told Ibrahim. When we met, my friend's relative had two hand grenades and a pistol with him. He asked us if we wanted to become fedayeen and we replied that this was our hope and dream. He explained that he had to test our courage. He gave us the two grenades, told us to attack a selected target and then bring back the grenades' safety pins to show they had been used. We went to an area called Sanafor which is near a railway track. The cars crossing the tracks had to slow down. We decided to throw the grenades when the cars slowed down, to be sure to hit our target. We returned and delivered the pins. We were told that from then on, we were members of the organization (PFLP).

My father's death had provided a strong incentive to join the organization, in addition to my hatred for the enemy. I had been brought up on the idea that one day Palestine would be liberated and we would return home. I could never accept seeing the Zionist soldiers walking freely about on the streets, without our doing something against them.

Until a certain incident, my family knew nothing of my activities. I was very cautious, and afraid of being kicked out of the organization had I told anybody. Then it happened that the comrade who had recruited us encountered some people from the PLF at night; each was carrying a gun. They suspected him and shot. He was wounded in the chest. This happened in the quarter where my comrade, Ibrahim, lived. Hearing the shooting, Ibrahim ran out of his house and saw our comrade lying wounded. He moved him to a nearby garden. Ibrahim came to my house and asked me to come with him. My family was suspicious about my leaving the house so late at night in such a hurry. I didn't come back home until a few days later. That incident revealed to my family my participation in the struggle.

We moved the injured comrade to a house and called a doctor who treated him. In those days, people prided themselves on helping the fedayeen. The family to whose house we had moved our comrade was very hospitable. Then we moved him to Shatti camp, near his family. He stayed there until his recovery and then returned to our camp (Jabalia). When I returned home, none of my family discussed the issue of my having joined the resistance. Nobody even asked me where I had been or what I had done.

## OPEN STRUGGLE

After that, we started to know some of the comrades who were pursued and had their houses constantly stormed by the Zionists. We got to know their life style. Older comrades saw us as young and inexperienced, while we respected their age

and experience. I was always hoping to accompany one of the older comrades on a mission. I used to watch every move they made. In particular I noticed their nice treatment of people, despite the fact that they were considered the local authorities. They could do anything without eliciting fear or questions, because the people thought that these men could never do anything wrong. All houses were open to them and to us. When we had to enter a house in the course of our work, the people treated us really well. They fed us, hid us and then left us to sleep. Sometimes members of the family would stand guard while we slept. At first, we acted very secretly. Through our close contact with the masses, they realized that the fedayeen did not come from outside, but were residents of the occupied homeland. They realized that the fedayeen were their own sons, fathers, brothers and sisters who lived among them and shared their life.

Then, the Zionist authorities began instating new, tougher security measures and making wide-scale arrests. They started to recruit collaborators, tempting them with money. Sometimes they got information through confessions extracted from imprisoned, tortured militants. The enemy forces began pursuing the fedayeen, and large numbers of the fighters started to live the life of fugitives. They didn't sleep in their own houses, or in the same place twice, etc. The number of those pursued increased immensely, and the fedayeen decided that since they were anyway wanted and hunted, they would go public and confront the occupation forces openly. Fedayeen started to appear in military uniform with their weapons. More men and women asked the fedayeen to take them into the resistance. People even claimed to be a member of the PFLP just to do anything which would earn them the title of fedayee. Every single patrol that entered the camp, whether on foot or in vehicles, was subject to attack. For this reason, the Zionists changed the direction of the seats in their vehicles, so that the soldiers sat facing the back in order to survey the area and not be surprised.

One time Zionist soldiers occupied a house we used to visit a lot. I was coming from Shatti camp, carrying my klashnikov. I arrived at the house at about 5 a.m. From our experience we had learned to distinguish between the footprints of an Arab and those of an Israeli. I noticed soldiers' footprints in front of the house. I decided to act as if I were an Israeli when the comrade's mother opened the door. I knocked and pointed my gun at the door, with my finger on the trigger. When the door opened, it was an Israeli soldier and I pulled the trigger. I started running, asking the people who came out of their houses to tell the comrades that there was an ambush at the house. Stunned by surprise and fear, I decided to retaliate and give the occupiers some of their own medicine. I ordered all the fighters in the camp to be on alert, ready to clash with any coming patrol. A military vehicle full of soldiers stopped at the rations distribution center. I threw a bomb at them and ran. As I was running, I saw a man we had always suspected of being a collaborator. He performed harmful acts while pretending to be one of the fedayeen. When he saw me, he drew his pistol and started shooting in the air, leading the Zionists to where I was. I just kept running.

## WHO RULES THE STRIP?

Operations were going on daily. This had extremely positive effects on the morale of the masses. The people realized who the enemy was. They saw the enemy troops being attacked every day and suffering casualties. The operations even had an

effect on the morale of the enemy soldiers, though in the opposite way. They used to curse their leaders in front of the people, and say they wanted to live in peace. Sometimes they would avoid confronting us when they spotted us. One day a patrol was going through the camp and got lost. Not knowing who they would meet, the soldiers just left the vehicle and ran away. We found the vehicle, searched it, took the food supplies and burned it up in broad daylight. In that period, the camp was absolutely controlled by the fedayeen.

In 1970, after the September massacre in Jordan, Abdel Nasser died. A large, armed demonstration erupted in the camp. The soldiers knew we were in the demonstration, but they did not dare disrupt it. Two months later, Israeli soldiers stormed and searched my house. When I learned of that, I never went back home. The soldiers were occupying the house facing ours, which was owned by an old woman living alone. From that incident, I realized that I was wanted. I decided to go public, fully armed. From then on, my weapon was my constant companion. I told no one of my whereabouts or how I spent my time.

One day we decided to write slogans on the walls. When we finished, we saw an enemy patrol coming. They saw us and started shooting. We returned fire. In the combat, I was shot in the foot - the same spot where I was injured during the war. My comrades carried me back to the base. Fortunately a nurse lived nearby. The comrades brought him and he gave me a sedative. After that, a female comrade began taking care of me. Less than a week later, I was moved to a hideout in a house where a female comrade lived. I was lying in bed in the courtyard, wearing my camouflage suit and watching the door. All of a sudden, the comrade's eight year old daughter rushed into the house shouting: «Israelis, Israelis.» I told her to leave the house fast. Her mother went and stood by the door, trying to prevent the Israelis from entering. She told them: «One moment, sir, my daughter is taking a bath.» Meanwhile, I went back to the hideout where a few comrades were sitting. We watched what was going on between the soldiers and the comrade. She was shouting: «You will not get in.» I proposed that

my comrades escape while I would confront the soldiers. One comrade, Abu Hadid, left me his klashnikov and I gave him my hand grenades and pistol. I was determined to sacrifice myself if necessary, especially as my injury prevented me from running. I asked my friends to kill me if I was hurt. We then rushed in the direction of the soldiers who had managed to enter the house after pushing the woman comrade aside. A battle erupted. Abu Hadid managed to disarm the commander and then got away. As he was running, he saw the communications operator in the patrol car. He threw a bomb, killing the operator and destroying his equipment.

This caused a disturbance which allowed me to escape in the opposite direction from my comrades. A woman saw me running and gave me her skirt; another gave me her head scarf. I took off my uniform and put on the skirt and scarf. I gave one of the women the money, letters and pictures I was carrying, asking her to give them to my family. Then I went to a hideout that nobody knew about. I built it under the rubble of a house that had been destroyed by the Israelis. The residents of the house were living in a tent nearby, and I asked them to go to the camp and bring me news about what had happened. They returned telling that Abu Hadid had been wounded. I sent a message to the comrades, informing them of what had happened. Their reply said that the comrades were safe. The messages I sent and received were all through a contact who was the mother of a martyred comrade. I asked the residents of the house to bring me a wig, a woman's dress and a taxi. Two women helped me get into the taxi. The driver noticed the klashnikov I was hiding under my dress, but said nothing. Ironically a policeman was sitting next to me. I went to the place the taxi took me and stayed there for a long enough period that I could move freely afterwards. Now, more than fifteen years after that incident, I still have pains from the wound. The scars have not vanished. As for the woman who hid us, she went to the hospital and got a doctor's report that she had been hospitalized during that period. She was saved, but not her house. The Israelis blew it up. Despite that, when

Comrade Hassan in Gaza.



she moved to another house, she once again built a hideout that we used from time to time.

## GUEVARA OF GAZA

One of the most beloved, respected and effective figures at that time was comrade Mohammad Al Aswad, rightfully known as Guevara of Gaza. His most outstanding characteristic was his cheerfulness. When we visited a family, he always attracted the hosts with his special style. We used to joke with him, saying: «Your presence makes us nothing... everybody talks to you and forgets us.» He used to answer: «It's not your fault, it's something in my face that makes people like me.»

Guevara always made himself our equal. He had guard duty just like everybody else. I remember one time I was on guard from midnight until 2 a.m. I had a watch which was then a rare commodity among us. At 1:30 I set the watch forward to 2, then went and woke Guevara up. He knew that it was not yet 2, but he just smiled and went on guard. He treated us in a truly comradely manner. I remember we had a comrade who was a former army officer. His manner was just like that in the army - shouting, cursing, ordering, etc. This made us dislike him, especially compared with Guevara.

Comrade Guevara was decisive in any nationalist or organizational issue. He paid attention to even the smallest matter, the things we used to neglect. He always asked us to pay for the food we ate when we entered a house. He stressed the importance of good conduct with the masses, citing examples from Vietnam and other revolutions. He was constantly reminding us that if we passed through a garden and ate from the fruits, to leave money in place of what we picked.

Once we arrested a collaborator and were taking him for investigation. He managed to run. We shot and injured him. Comrade Guevara was nearby. When he heard the shooting, he came running and saw the collaborator on the ground wounded. Though we had conclusive evidence that this man was a traitor, comrade Guevara insisted that we conduct intensive investigations to make the indictment more concrete. He ordered us never to shoot any person unless a decision had been taken by our military court, approved by the commander and unanimously agreed upon. In combat, comrade Guevara stressed the necessity of shooting first. He said: «Don't let the enemy start the battle.» This tactic later proved to be effective.

## PURSUED

One rainy day when mud covered the roads, I was sitting with Ibrahim, and a young man from the PLA, named Abu Difaa, in a house located in an area full of trees which gave it special protection. Suddenly a man came in; we later found out he was from the PLF. He called Abu Difaa and said he wanted to tell him about a disturbing dream. I told Ibrahim I wanted to go out and hear what they were talking about. I left my klashnikov with Ibrahim. As I was listening, I heard someone saying in Arabic, but with an accent: «Come here!» I immediately headed for the house. Before reaching it, I heard shots, so I retreated in the opposite direction. On my way, I met Abu Difaa and asked him to give me his klashnikov. He refused and I asked for his grenades which he gave me. He then told me to withdraw from the area entirely, so as not to be caught. I refused. Due to my insistence, he agreed to accompany me to a nearby house which had two gates, one opening onto the main road and the other onto the garden. When we

entered the house, I asked the daughter to run to where Ibrahim was to bring back news. As soon as she left, the dogs started howling, signalling that strangers were coming. The woman of the house went out to look. As she opened the door, she screamed: «Escape, escape!» A soldier stormed into the house. I was in the yard. When I saw the soldier coming, I threw a bomb at him. At the same time, Abu Difaa aimed his rifle and started shooting, as he ran in the opposite direction. As we ran, we met a girl I knew. She said: «Ibrahim was here a minute ago.» I couldn't believe it. I wanted to kiss her I was so happy. We asked her where he had gone and headed in the same direction. On our way, other people reaffirmed what the girl had said. I asked one man how many klashnikovs Ibrahim was carrying, and he said only one. Thus I realized that my gun was gone. When we met Ibrahim, we embraced. He handed me his gun. I refused at first, but on his insistence I accepted. He then told us everything that had happened.

We could not stay in any one place long, sometimes not more than an hour. The Zionists had intensified their pursuit of the fedayeen, employing new methods. The special forces were brought in large numbers, greatly increasing the Zionist military presence in the area. Large numbers of checkpoints were erected, as were concentration centers for emergency needs. They began employing a method whereby troops were positioned in a U-formation. This way, when a resistance group attempted to retreat, it would be surrounded on all sides. We therefore decided not to withdraw from such traps, but to clash with the enemy troops. The Zionist authorities also used Arab Jews to pose as resistance fighters, claiming they had arrived from Lebanon. They would ask people about the location of the fedayeen, even naming the fighters they wanted to contact. We informed people about this trick, asking them not to answer anybody who asked about our whereabouts.

Once I was with a group of comrades, many of them new members, in a house in the middle of a garden. Suddenly a man showed up, looked at us and then just ran away. A few minutes later a woman came and said there were some Zionists claiming to be fedayeen. We left the house, looking for them in the direction she pointed. I asked my comrades to shout at them first. If they didn't stop, we would shoot. When we saw them, we shouted, and they started shooting at us. We shot back. We were in a hilly area and we started to retreat, first crawling and then running. After less than 300 meters, we heard the buzzing of helicopters over our heads. Luckily the area was full of trees, so the helicopters could not locate us. As we were running, we met two PLF fighters who ran with us. I asked where their weapons were. They said they had gotten stuck in a fence, and they could not get them out. We later found out that the Zionists had executed a civilian from Al Jaradat family in sheer revenge. They claimed that the guns they found in the fence were his.

## LEAVING GAZA

I left the occupied territories as a result of the increasingly tight situation. The idea started as a joke based on two factors: my bad health, since my wounds had never healed completely, and Ibrahim's wound; and the difficult situation which meant we could never rest. After a while we started to take the idea of leaving more seriously. We knew a man who collected old clothes from door to door, and passed them through a mill which shredded them into lumps. We suspected the driver who transported this material of being a collaborator. We told him

we would give him a chance to prove he was not a collaborator, but a true patriot, and he agreed enthusiastically. At this point we began to prepare to carry out our idea.

We sent the driver out several times to keep watch on the road and see how searches were carried out. When we were confident that our plans had a chance of success, we decided to move. We sent for the driver and had him sleep at our place. At 4 a.m. we got into the trunk of the car. We had instructed the driver how to act, and also threatened him in case he thought of giving us away to the enemy. We had taken our arms with us - four klashnikovs, two guns and some hand grenades. When we reached the checkpoint, the car stopped. We could hear the conversation between our driver and the Zionists. When the search was over, the driver went on for an hour. Then the car stopped in a deserted area. The driver got out and came around and congratulated us on the success of the first part of our plan.

At around 9 a.m. the car stopped again and the driver let us out. We found ourselves in Ain Al Sultan camp (on the West Bank, where the Zionists had evacuated all the families during the 1967 war due to the camp's proximity to the Jordan River). We jumped into the first house which was near the main road, and stayed there till about 6 p.m. We got acquainted with the camp where one of us had formerly worked as a laborer in a grove. When we reached the house, comrades who had been on the lookout for us came and gave us food, as well as a rope and deflated car tire. We stayed in the house all day. The only thing we lacked was water. We noticed a pool of rainwater and drank from the top, using a handkerchief as a filter. The date was February 21, 1972.

At around 6 p.m. we left the house, hanging a sock in front of it as the signal that we had left. We moved eastwards, led by the comrade who knew the directions of the area, but not all the details. After walking about three kilometers, we came up against a road covered with special material to pick up footprints. Beyond that there was barbed wire and then a minefield. We were braced for the situation. The fact that we might die before getting out was a possibility and we were fully prepared to take the risk. We crossed the road, the barbed wire and the minefield. We came upon a stream and walked close to the bank where it would have been difficult to plant mines. We came upon another stretch of barbed wire and crossed it. After that was a stretch of rocky heights. We began to feel acute thirst about this time. To save energy, every time we got to the top of a hill, we would slide down instead of climbing. At the bottom were salt marshes which we had to swim across. We were so thirsty that we hazarded drinking this water, but it was so salty we vomited. We walked non-stop until 4 a.m. the next day when we came upon a grassy area. We sat down and gradually we discerned the sound of running water. We got up and walked toward the sound. We found a river (the Jordan River). One of the group tried swimming to the other side, but the current was too strong. We then built a fire; after getting warm, we slept.

At around 6 a.m. we woke up. The first thing we saw was an Israeli lookout post. We hastened to hide in the trees. We then began to search for a good place to cross the river, a place where it was wider and shallower so the current would not be so strong. Luckily we found such a place. One of us tied one

end of the rope to a tree and got in the tire to swim to the eastern bank. When he got to the other side, he tied his end of the rope to a tree, and we began to cross one by one with the aid of the rope. Our klashnikovs got wet and muddy, and could only have been a burden from then on, so we cast them aside, but kept our guns and hand grenades. Again we had to cross a field of landmines, but luckily it was obvious where the mines had been planted, so we made it across safely. By the time we got to the main road it was around noon, and we were extremely hungry and thirsty.

## IMPRISONED IN JORDAN

We were still in doubt as to whether we had actually made it to Jordan, but then we saw cars with Jordanian license plates. We hitched a ride with a Jordanian military vehicle. We had no alternative but to tell the driver we were fedayeen coming from the occupied territories. He asked for our IDs, but of course, we had no papers; we showed him our guns and hand grenades. Then another military vehicle came and the officer started asking us who we were. We told him. They took us to a military camp and gave us food and clothes. We were transferred to Amman and questioned by the military intelligence for fifteen days. After that, we were moved to the general intelligence. They took our pictures with us holding up a number, full-face and in profile. Then we were locked up in cells one meter by two meters. The cell I was put in contained about twelve men. Most of them were people in the resistance movement, who had been arrested after Black September. We were careful about what we said. I got to know one man whose family I was well acquainted with in the occupied territories. After I gave him details about his family, he was reassured, and the other prisoners were encouraged to talk with me.

We remained in the general intelligence prison for about a week or ten days. They then gathered all of us before the interrogation officer who asked us what we wanted. When we told him we wanted our weapons back, he laughed at us. We were then sentenced and transferred to Mahatta prison where we should remain until someone could bail us out; then we would have to check in at a police station twice daily. At Mahatta, they shaved our heads. I had pictures of my friends who had been martyred in the occupied territories. The prison warden tore them up, heedless of my attempts to stop him. They were scornful of us.

When we entered the prison, we began to look for a place to sleep. In the process, one of my comrades said, «There's your brother!» I did not know that he had been deported after the Zionist authorities had arrested him, keeping him hostage to press me to turn myself in. It was a highly emotional moment for me. My brother said he had not expected to ever see me again, thinking I had been martyred. He took me to a special room for deportees from the occupied territories, supervised by the ICRC. Some members of my family were there for a visit. They then informed the underground resistance of my presence in Mahatta. I remained there one month. Then comrades bailed me out.

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*Seventeen years later, comrade Hassan is still a revolutionary. He works in the PFLP's military section and is active in training new recruits how to fight the enemy.*

# May 1st

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## Recollections of a Palestinian Worker



For May 1st, International Workers' Day, we have translated a selection from the recollections of the veteran Palestinian communist, Khalil Khouri, taken from a long interview made with him by the Palestinian poet, Hannah Nasser. The recollections reveal the relations among workers in Palestine in the thirties and forties, the relations between the workers and British colonialism, and how the discrimination practiced by the Zionist settlers thwarted efforts at proletarian internationalism.

We were eleven persons living in one house (in the village of Rama). Our family was barely able to obtain enough food for that number of people. One day, in the early thirties, a guest from Abu Sanan village arrived. He was well-dressed and looked well-fed. He said that he worked in a bakery in Haifa, owned by a German, and that he earned seven shillings a day... and a loaf of bread. After a few years, he continued, he had managed to buy a piece of land and some olive trees, which classified him as an owner. He said that the bakery owner needed a boy my age to work in the bakery. Two days later I was working there, earning five shillings a day... and a loaf of bread.

After I had worked two years, the owner terminated my services for one year, as he said, so that a German boy, also my age, could replace me. At that time, I had accumulated an amount of shillings and learned the German language. I found a job at another bakery owned by a German Jew in Al Halisah. The owner liked my enthusiasm and knowledge of the German language. He did not know Hebrew, and he used to hide me when the Histadrut representatives searched the shops. The Histadrut had raised the



Khalil Khouri

slogan of «Hebrew labor» which meant employing only Jews. It was impossible to continue hiding me between the flour sacks every time the representatives showed up. So before completing a year in his bakery, I found myself jobless.

However, I found a job at a British bakery called Sebni. There I met a Jewish worker who from time to time told me about life in Europe, particularly in Russia, and about the Bolsheviks. I didn't care at first. At that time, we reacted negatively to the word *Bolshevik* due to the abundance of lies and fabrications that had been spread about it.

In 1936, the Palestinian revolt erupted, and relations between Arabs and Jews worsened. But my friend continued explaining to me that the evil source behind all the troubles we were facing was the British themselves; they were the enemies of both sides. He also explained that, if left alone, the Arabs and Jews could live peacefully together, as did scores of nationalities in socialist Russia. Although I could not understand everything he was talking about, I was very eager to hear more.

One day he said, «Khouri, you must learn... leave the bakery and learn!» I told him it was impossible to leave the bakery, given my family's economic situation and my responsibilities towards them. He then advised me to join the Palestinian Communist Party where I could learn a lot, as he said. I had a friend at the time, the late Assaf Hananiya, who knew everything about me and my Jewish friend. I used to tell him everything my Jewish friend told me. Thus, together we joined the party, knowing how dangerous it was to do such a thing.

Soon we were invited to attend our first meeting. It was a thrill for us - going in secret, using secret passwords, and the meeting itself. It was held in a damaged house in the bushes of the Carmel mountain, in Haifa. There were fifty persons attending, who barely knew one another. I remember asking the man sitting next to me about his name. He replied: «My name is a spearhead in the chest of colonialism.» I realized I had to stop being curious.

Five speakers took the podium. We only saw their shadows because of the darkness. I recall that the speeches focused on the danger of fascism's rise, and British colonialism's threats to Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. I remember one speaker who quoted a poem which

said in the end that to repel the British from our land, we had to 'Bolshevize'. He got a standing ovation. Another speaker talked about fascism and Italy's occupation of Ethiopia and Libya. He talked about the revolution led by Omar Mukhtar, the oppression of the Libyan people, and how five of the revolution's leaders were thrown from an airplane into the sea. After that, I participated in distributing secret leaflets, using the wagon which distributed bread from the bakery.

During that time, I rarely visited my village. I went only once every two or three months, due to the restrictions imposed on traveling as a result of the growth of the revolt. I remember one time in the village, on a Sunday when all attended mass at the church, with the exception of the sick and a few absentees. All of a sudden, British soldiers led by an officer stormed the church, showing no respect. Other soldiers were surrounding the church. The officer just started looking, or rather surveying the congregation, and then pointed at me with his finger, indicating: «Follow me!» I was the only one in the church wearing western-style clothes; the others were traditionally dressed. He must have hoped I knew English. He asked, «What's going on here?» I answered: «This is a church, and people are praying.» «When will you finish?» he asked. «I don't know, the priest knows,» I replied. He told me to go in, ask the priest and return to tell him.

I went into the chapel with the eyes of the people following me in fear and questioning. Before the priest could answer me, the altar boy approached and whispered in my ear: «Tell them the services conclude after four hours.» When I repeated that to the officer, he just exploded in my face, shouting: «Damn liar! Beat it!» I went back to my place. We were very scared, knowing that a landmine had exploded under an armored military vehicle near the village. We were afraid that they would punish the whole village as had happened in other villages like Kafr Yasif.

Ten minutes passed, and our fears grew greater and greater. Then the soldiers came back, stormed the church, waving their rifles and ordering us out. They could not even wait for people to move on their own. Rather they applied their own method to speed things up, forcing men, women and children to evacuate the church,

pushing them with their rifle butts. A woman was pushed to the floor and she let out a loud scream. This made Alexander Khouri, the oldest person in the congregation, run towards the soldiers, waving his cane and shouting, «You bastards, Turkey never did what you are doing... We thought you came to rescue us from Turkey's tyranny, with two crosses on your flag, not one, but you are worse than Turkey...» Then he cursed the British cross, calling it a fake, and attacked the officer with his cane. The soldiers caught him, hit him and dragged him around, without any consideration for his age. The priest protested angrily, only to face the same treatment as Alexander.

There were many soldiers and it was useless to resist. They took us to the public square where all the villagers were gathered. The soldiers chose forty men and took them, as they claimed, to clear the road blocks set up by the revolutionaries on the main road. One week later, they were released.

World War II erupted and the British army confiscated all businesses including the bakery I was working in. Thus, I found myself jobless once again. A friend of mine from Al Boqeia'h helped me get work as a carpenter in one of the British army camps, although I knew nothing about carpentry. I remember one time I was attempting to straighten some bent nails. A British officer saw me and asked in a mocking tone: «Are you a carpenter?» «No,» I confessed. He smiled and said, «Okay, you don't lie... I'll have someone teach you.» But before learning carpentry, I was fired. So I went back to my old job, baking, at a British army bakery in the bay of Haifa.

The war and war-related efforts created work for everybody. Since there were not enough workers in Palestine, a large number came from neighboring countries, looking for jobs. In the bakery I worked in, there were 84 workers, of whom 72 were Egyptians. There were Lebanese, Syrians and Armenians as well. The work was divided into two daily, 12-hour shifts. There was no break for eating, so we either had to eat while working, or finish our job as fast as possible, which was very tiring, to save a few minutes for eating. I remember a 'break' like that, at night with the lights dimmed. An Arab worker was going to the bathroom; unknowingly, he stepped on the foot of an Armenian worker who

was lying down, trying to relax during these few minutes. The Armenian was hurt and he cursed the worker in Turkish. To his surprise, the Arab worker replied with another Turkish curse. The Armenian, still surprised, asked, «Where did you learn Turkish?» The Arab, who was a Syrian, replied, «An Armenian came to our town, fleeing Turkey's massacres against the Armenian people. My father befriended him and learned from him how to process cheese.» Then the Armenian shouted, «How could you then curse your father's cheese-processing teacher?» The two embraced... and they were best friends from then on.

I did not like the job. It was not only tiring, but devastating: 12 hours a day non-stop, heat... and what was worse were the insults the workers had to suffer. Cursing was the lightest form of insult. Our supervisor was a British sergeant major in his fifties, red-faced, with constantly trembling lips. This trembling intensified when he was drunk. He used to arrive late at the bakery, not yet sober. He would call a worker to his office, beat him for no reason, and then fire him. Actually this was his way of blackmail. There was always a person who acted as 'mediator' between the 'fired' worker and the sergeant in return for a bribe. This mediator was usually one of the three foremen whom we considered even worse than the sergeant of the trembling lips, for they were Egyptians - Arab! They always carried leather whips and beat the Egyptian workers for the silliest of reasons.

The workers lived in constant fear of the sergeant and foremen. No one dared to protest, for the foreigners in particular realized that they were illegally living in the country. One phone call to the police could send them beyond Palestine's borders, where they would find only unemployment and misery. The Egyptians used to infiltrate into Palestine, hiding in cargo trains. The authorities overlooked this because of the need for workers and bribes, but the law did not protect these workers; rather it deported them. The sergeant knew all this; he knew that the workers, especially the Egyptians, desperately needed the work. He used this to his advantage. He thus increased the oppression and blackmail of the workers. Those who refused to accept his practices were reported to the police who in turn deported the workers.

# 39 Years of Infamy

## The Creation of the Zionist State

May 15th marks 39 years since the Zionist movement created its racist state by occupying the major part of Palestine. This illegal act was accomplished by brute force, like all of Zionism's major advances. The article below relates how the Zionists militarized Palestine, dispossessing the Palestinian people and turning their land into a base for further aggression and expansion, in line with imperialist interests.

The first Arab-Zionist war, the war of 1948, was not the result of inherent tension between Arabs and Jews. Rather it was minutely planned by the Zionist leaders to provide a cover for their occupation of Palestine and expulsion of the native inhabitants - crimes deemed necessary to accomplish their goal of an exclusively Jewish state, to serve as imperialism's foremost ally in the region.

The Zionists' war preparations relied to a great extent on their alliance with the colonial powers, specifically Britain, dating back to the participation of a Zionist brigade in the British expedition against Turkey in World War I. Having offered Jews as cannon fodder to the British war efforts, the Zionists secured the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, which promised British support to «the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people,» despite the fact that 92% of Palestine's population were non-Jewish Arabs. On this background, the Zionist delegation to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference circulated a plan for the Zionist state with borders extending from Sidon (Lebanon) in the north, eastwards to include parts of Syria (roughly covering the Golan Heights) and what is now Jordan, all of Palestine and a part of Egypt's Sinai. The document defined these boundaries as essential for the state's economic viability, especially water resources. Special reference was made to the need for the fertile plains east of the Jordan River.<sup>1</sup> This plan foretold the 1948 and 1967 wars and occupations, as well as the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

The Hagana, the embryo of the Israeli army, was formed in 1920, and began intensive training with the British colonial forces in Palestine in the 1930s,

to beat down the 1936-39 Palestinian revolt. At this time, the British formed three counterinsurgency units, the Night Squads, composed of Zionist settlers, and commanded by Captain Orde Wingate whom David Ben-Gurion paid tribute to as follows: «Wingate's work was not in vain. The Hagana's best officers were trained in the Special Night Squads, and Wingate's doctrines were taken over by the Israeli Defence Forces...» Moshe Dayan, who was personally trained by Wingate, said: «In some sense every leader of the Israeli army even today is a disciple of Wingate. He gave us our technique, he was the inspiration of our tactics, he was our dynamic.»<sup>2</sup>

The Palmach, the Hagana's strike force, was formed in 1941, to defend Zionist settlements in Palestine, as 32,000 Zionist settlers volunteered to serve with British units in World War II. The Jewish Agency worked to channel these volunteers into units that would get training useful to Zionism in the future. (This was, of course, in marked contrast to the Zionist movement's failure to participate in the anti-fascist resistance movement in Europe.)

Added to the arms and training acquired from the British, there was underground Zionist training in Palestine and abroad, the formation of the Irgun and Lehi (Stern Gang) terror groups alongside the Hagana, and large arms and manpower shipments to the Zionists in Palestine. «Already in 1945, the composition of the Jewish immigrants into Palestine - legal and illegal - was changing: people of military age, many of whom had already had military training and/or experience in Europe, predominated.»<sup>3</sup> Irgun and Hagana men beat up and harassed

Jewish youth in the displaced persons camps in Europe, who didn't want to go to Palestine and fight for Zionism. Just as the composition of the immigrants belie Zionist claims of creating 'Israel' to «save» the Jews from the holocaust, so other facts refute their claims of self-reliance in creating this state: In 1948-9, the Zionist movement tried to recruit thousands of US servicemen, including officers, in the US and Europe, to serve as instructors for their new army.<sup>4</sup> Most of the Israeli pilots in the 1948 war were foreigners, especially from the US. Mercenaries also participated.

Thus, the stage was set for the Zionists' first expansionist, preventive war, launched to prevent a Palestinian state which would not have allied with imperialism, as the Zionist state was intended to from the beginning.

### WAR ON CIVILIANS

With their pro-Zionist slant, most bourgeois historians date the 1948 war to May 15th, when the Arab armies entered Palestine. In reality this war grew out of the Zionist militias' terror attacks on the Palestinian civilian population, which started well before, and escalated dramatically in the spring of 1948. On November 29, 1947, the UN had adopted the Partition Plan, whereby 56% of Palestine was allocated to a 'Jewish state' and 43% for an Arab state, while Jerusalem was to be a UN-administered international zone; at this time Jews were less than one-third of the population and owned about 6% of Palestine's land. Palestinians staged strikes and demonstrations in protest of this injustice, while the Zionists celebrated. The nature of their celebrations is clear from what Ben-Gurion wrote: «Arabs started fleeing from the cities almost as soon as disturbances began in the early days of December (1947)...»<sup>5</sup>

To rule out any rethinking of the resolution and to expand their already unjustly large territory, the Hagana, Irgun and Lehi went into action. In the areas designated for the 'Jewish state', Palestinian citizens were expelled from Tiberius, Haifa, Safad, Beisan and hundreds of villages. The Zionist forces attacked and occupied the villages of Qazaza, Salameh, Saris, Qastal and Biyar 'Adas, and the towns of Jaffa and Acre - all in the area reserved for the Arab state. In the six months before

May 15, 1948, 400,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes.<sup>6</sup> The single most glaring atrocity committed in this expansionist drive was the April 9th massacre at Deir Yasin where the Irgun and Lehi were joined by Hagana cadres in their slaughter of 250 Palestinians, including women, children and elderly. This was not an excess committed in the heat of war, but part of a premeditated strategy to strike fear in the Palestinians, leading them to flee, while simultaneously clearing the road to Jerusalem where the Zionists attacked and occupied the Katamoun quarter on April 29th. It is

also probable that the Zionists hoped that their expansionist drive would precipitate the Arab armies' entry into Palestine, so they could cover their war on civilians with claimed 'self-defense' against combined Arab forces - a frequent theme in Zionist propaganda.

Though world opinion tended to forget these facts until the Palestinian revolution revitalized the Palestinian cause in the late sixties, the Zionists themselves officially recorded their actions. Ben-Gurion wrote: «As April (1948) began, our War of Independence swung decisively from the defence to attack... Field troops and Palmach in

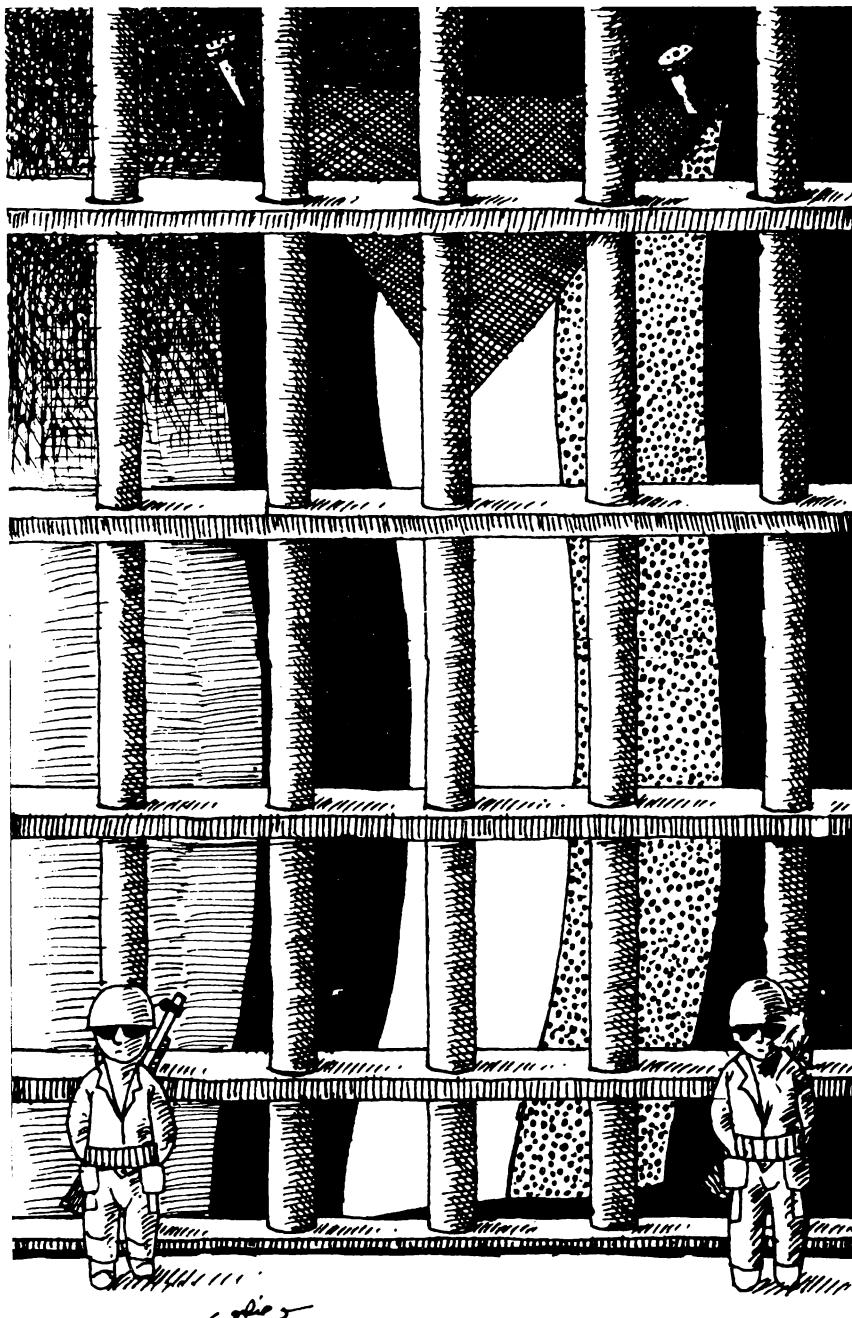
particular were deployed and quickly showed the mettle that was soon to animate our army and bring it victory. In operation Nachshon, the road to Jerusalem was cleared at the beginning of April, almost all of New Jerusalem occupied, and the guerrillas were expelled from Haifa, Jaffa, Tiberius, Safad while still the Mandatory was present.»<sup>7</sup> In *The Revolt: Story of the Irgun*, Menachem Begin wrote that there would not have been a state of 'Israel' without the «victory» at Deir Yasin. An IDF Intelligence Branch report from June 30, 1948, which was recently found in a private Israeli library, surmises that «more than 70% of the Arab exodus from Palestine by June 1948 was caused by Jewish military attacks.» It speaks of «the depopulation of some 250 villages and several towns by June 1948.» Contrary to some attempts to pin the worst atrocities on the Irgun and Lehi, rather than mainstream Zionism, the report stated that «at least 55 per cent of the total exodus was caused by our (Hagana/IDF) operations and their influence.»<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the 1948 war was fought and won before the Arab armies entered Palestine. The warriors were almost exclusively the Zionists. The Palestinians, though they put up resistance in some places, had been lacking in arms and military forces since the brutal suppression of the 1936-39 revolt. Ben-Gurion's reference to guerrillas is more a propaganda ploy than a reflection of the facts, like the Zionists' claim in 1982 to be fighting 'terrorists' in Lebanon, while they themselves were terrorizing the whole population.

## TRICKING THE ARAB ARMIES

In mid-May, the British withdrew from Palestine, the Zionists proclaimed their state and the Arab armies entered Palestine. The fighting was scattered and inconclusive, and within a week the UN was arranging a ceasefire, ordering the two sides to desist from bringing in more arms or military forces. In fact, the Zionists used the interval until July 9th, when fighting resumed for nine days, for a massive build-up. In *The Seven Fallen Pillars*, Jon Kimche (pro-Zionist historian) wrote: «Israeli emissaries scoured the whole of Europe and America for possible supplies... When the truce ended, a coherent Jewish army with a tiny but effective

Picture by Suleiman Mansour.



air force and a small but daring navy was ready to give battle.»

No such violations were recorded on the Arab side, and the Zionists' build-up turned out to be mainly a preparation for coming wars, though there are several indications that they considered a qualitative escalation at the time. The May 31, 1948 entry in Ben-Gurion's diary reads: «If there is no ceasefire, we will prepare an operation to free Jerusalem. We have decided to bomb Amman and Cairo.»<sup>9</sup> In June 1948, the US military attaché in Cairo reported «reliable indications» in Tel Aviv and elsewhere that Zionist forces were preparing to use gas against the Palestinian population centers.<sup>10</sup>

As it happened, the Zionist forces used the stalemate that ensued, until armistice agreements were signed with the Arab states in 1949, to continue the expulsion of Palestinians and the destruction of their villages. By that time, another 350,000 Palestinians had been forced to leave, and the Zionists controlled 77.4% of Palestine. In the process, a less known but just as atrocious massacre as Deir Yasin occurred in Dawaymeh, west of Hebron, in October 1948. On a Friday, the Zionists entered the town in armored vehicles, firing indiscriminately. It is estimated that 70 people were killed in the mosque, while 85 were machinegunned down outside a cave where they had sought refuge. As many as 70 were later killed trying to return to their homes after the Zionists occupied and destroyed the village. The mukhtar of Dawaymeh later compiled a list of

the missing, totalling 455. The massacre in Dawaymeh was part of a larger Zionist operation, designed to extend their territory before the signing of the armistice agreements. The attack was carried out by the 89th Battalion of the Israeli army, led by Moshe Dayan.

## MORE WARS TO COME

An underlying war aim for the Zionists in 1948 was showing their strength and ability to be imperialism's foremost ally in the region. The Zionists clearly stated their aims to the US in advance: On May 3, 1943, General Patrick J. Hurley, personal representative of US President Roosevelt in the Middle East, reported to the president: «The Zionist organization in Palestine has indicated its commitment to an enlarged program for: (1) a sovereign Jewish state which would embrace Palestine and probably eventually Transjordan; (2) an eventual transfer of the Arab population from Palestine to Iraq; (3) Jewish leadership for the whole Middle East in the fields of economic development and control.»<sup>11</sup> With the US having emerged from World War II as the strongest imperialist power, the Zionist leadership underscored what it could offer by allowing the US mission to have military attachés, the only state accorded this privilege.

Thus, the creation of the Zionist state not only uprooted the Palestinian people. It provided the US with a bridgehead for spreading imperialist dominance in the Middle East. The resulting US-Israeli alliance, and their

joint drive to control the area, has generated a series of wars since 1948, at the expense of peace, progress and independence for the Arab people as a whole. (See study in this issue.) Their cooperation has also taken on international dimensions: 'Israel' constitutes one station in the US's global military network. It is one of few states ready to join the most aggressive US projects - from supplying the contras in Nicaragua and shielding the apartheid regime in Pretoria from sanctions, to Reagan's nuclear-powered Star Wars.

For these reasons, the struggle to liberate Palestine is not only a just national cause concerning one people - the Palestinians. It is part of the worldwide struggle against imperialism, racism, oppression and militarization. Supporting the Palestinians' return to their homeland means supporting peace and progress in the entire area.

<sup>1</sup> Hadawi, Sami, *Palestine in Focus*, Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1968, pages 10-12.

<sup>2</sup> both quotes from Sayigh, Rosemary, *Palestinians from Peasants to Revolutionaries*, London: Zed Press, 1979, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> Green, Stephen, *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel*, New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1984, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, pages 52-3.

<sup>5</sup> Ben-Gurion, David, *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, 1954.

<sup>6</sup> Hadawi, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>7</sup> Ben-Gurion, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>8</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, March 2, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> Rabinovich, Itamar and Jehuda Reinharz (editors), *Israel in the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> Green, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> Hadawi, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

# The Israeli Role in the Middle East

In previous issues we have printed a study on the role of 'Israel' in the Middle East, as perceived and engineered by US imperialism. In this issue, we begin a series on how the Zionist leadership conceived and developed their state's role in practice.

From its inception, the Zionist movement clearly defined its role in the Middle East. Theodor Hertzl, father of political Zionism, argued as follows in his book, *Der Judenstaat (State of the Jews)*, published in London in 1896: «We should there form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism.» Clearly aligning with colonial expansion and interests in the East, the Zionist movement sought the help of the great powers to fulfill its project. By establishing the state of 'Israel' on occupied Palestinian land, the Zionist leadership began acting on this pledge, enforcing a geopolitical division in the heart of the

Arab world, occupying the major portion of Palestine and displacing more than half of its people. This accomplished, the Zionists turned their efforts against the rising Arab national movement, particularly its center in Nasser's Egypt, and the latter's alliance with the Soviet Union. As early as March 1952, the Israeli ambassador to the US, Abba Eban (later foreign minister during the June 1967 aggression), urged that 'Israel' be included in any Western-Oriental Middle East defense organization being planned.<sup>1</sup>

Contrary to all demagogic about «saving the Jewish people,» the Zionists turned them into cannon fodder in order to have

‘Israel’ serve as imperialism’s forward base in the area. The Zionist lobby openly advertises for this function in its efforts to solicit massive US aid to ‘Israel’. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the most influential component of the Zionist lobby, published a booklet entitled «The Strategic Value of Israel» in 1982, timed to coincide with the invasion of Lebanon and the Reagan Administration’s military build-up. The topics of the booklet include: «Israel as a Prepositioning Site,» «Comparing Deployment Times» and «Comparison in Terms of Cost.» Based on the geostrategic location, political stability, reliability and «advanced society» of ‘Israel’, the AIPAC argues that US troops and military equipment positioned there could be more easily, speedily and cheaply be moved to the Gulf «in the event of Soviet aggression,» than from the US or existing US bases in the area.

The AIPAC moreover appeals directly for Israeli inclusion in NATO: «From the point of view of US defense planning, it has the potential to contribute in three theaters: the Gulf, the Mediterranean, and NATO’s Southern and Central fronts.» In future projection, this means not only Israeli involvement against the socialist community, but also against a revolutionary development occurring in Western Europe.

## IN WORD AS IN DEED

Putting statements aside, historical reality provides the best evidence of the Israeli role in the Middle East. Most obvious are the five major Arab-Zionist wars, all generated by Israeli expansionism, in addition to continuous raids on neighboring countries in the interim. Another indication is that the Zionist state has developed its own atomic weapons in secret cooperation with the imperialist powers, and more recently joined the US’s SDI (Star Wars). Other evidence is seen in the regional and international alliances into which the Zionist state has entered, from the Phalangists in Lebanon and the Shah of Iran, to Somoza and now the contras in Nicaragua. Over the years, the experience gained in policing the Middle East has enabled ‘Israel’ to assume a leading position in exporting arms and military expertise to reactionary states and forces fighting liberation movements and newly independent countries.

The structure of the Israeli society itself has been determined by the military nature of the Zionist state’s role in the region. This is seen in the overlap between the Israeli political and military leadership, and the militarization of the economy and society in general. Zionist settlements in occupied Palestine serve as armed bastions in the midst of the Palestinian population, each a microcosm of the existence of ‘Israel’ as a garrison state in the midst of the Arab world.

Facts and figures attest to the Zionist state’s role as a strike force for imperialism: «Official government releases indicate that the IDF can deploy eleven divisions within seventy-two hours. Intelligence estimates, however, suggest that it can actually deploy almost fifteen divisions. If that estimate is correct, it makes the IDF one of the largest deployable ground forces in the Western world. By comparison, the United States army is able to deploy some sixteen divisions, but it would take an enormous amount of time and effort to fill them out with sufficient manpower and equipment (280 days according to one estimate)...»<sup>2</sup>

## FROM PALESTINE 1948 TO LEBANON 1982

Many analysts of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon fall prey to the illusion that this war was basically different from the previous campaigns fought by ‘Israel’. It is said that this was

the first war which ‘Israel’ had not been forced to fight, or had not fought in ‘self-defense’. It was claimed that this was the first war when ‘Israel’ inflicted unnecessary civilian casualties, and fought for the sake of imposing a particular regime in the country invaded. Such reasoning is to accept the self-perception of the Israelis themselves, for it was in fact the first war where substantial portions of the population *realized* that they were not fighting a necessary war of self-defense. The war was prolonged by the tough resistance put up by Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian patriots. The resulting difficulties faced by the invading Israeli army enforced this realization upon Israelis and the world at large.

Yet the wars of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973 were in essence no different. The October War in 1973 differed only in that technically it was begun by Egypt and Syria, but as an attempt to partially redress the results of the 1967 Zionist aggression against them. The major Arab-Zionist wars have been what the Israelis term ‘preventive strikes’, i.e., wars they themselves planned, provoked and launched to achieve expansionist goals. The goal of changing the regime of an Arab country was also included in the previous wars. In 1948, Zionist aggression imposed and expanded a Jewish state in Palestine at the expense of Palestinian statehood. In 1956 and again in 1967, a prime Israeli war aim was precipitating the downfall of Nasser. Just as in Lebanon 1982, ‘Israel’ has each time used phoney excuses for starting a war, violated ceasefires to its own advantage, and engineered its military campaign to mesh with imperialist interests. By reviewing these wars, we aim to illustrate the Israeli role in the region, while refuting the commonly accepted propaganda that Arab ‘aggression and intransigence’ are the cause of the Middle East conflict. Concrete facts expose the falsity of the Israeli claim to be a small state in the midst of Arabs who intend to «throw the Jews into the sea.»

We have put a detailed review of the 1948 war in a separate article in this issue, to mark the 39th year since the creation of the Zionist state. Below we will concentrate on the 1956 and 1967 Israeli aggressions.

## JOINING THE COLD WAR AND THE CAMPAIGN VS. EGYPT

In the fifties, the US administration was formulating the Eisenhower Doctrine, wherein the Middle East was considered pivotal for containing the Soviet Union. David Ben-Gurion, the Israeli prime minister, sent a memorandum to President Eisenhower, which spelled out the Zionist state’s alignment in the US-inspired cold war: «Nasser’s take-over of the Arab Middle East, with the assistance of the tremendous might of the Soviet Union, would have serious implications for the West... We have begun to strengthen our ties with neighboring countries on the outer circle of the Middle East: Iran, Ethiopia and Turkey, with the purpose of creating a powerful dam against the Nasserist-Soviet torrent...»<sup>3</sup> With Turkey a member of NATO, and Turkey and Iran in the Baghdad Pact, this marked the beginning of Israeli striving for integration into US-dominated military axes and strategy.

In 1954, Moshe Dayan, head of the Israeli army’s operations branch and on his way to be chief of staff, presented a plan for military moves against Egypt to precipitate a war. Defense Minister Lavon and Ben-Gurion proposed invading and occupying parts of Syria, to control the Jordan River headwaters, while demonstrating Israeli strength to the US. The three together forwarded the idea of precipitating a civil war in Lebanon and setting up a ‘Christian state’ under the leadership ►

of an army officer they could buy. Though these plans were not approved by the cabinet at the time, all were enacted in the ensuing years in accordance with the policy of 'preventive wars.' Menachem Begin forthrightly stated the aims of such wars in the Knesset on October 12, 1955: «firstly, the annihilation of Arab power; and secondly, the expansion of our territory.» Dayan had been even more explicit in Israeli radio in February 1952, speaking of the Israeli army's «ultimate objective of erecting the Israeli empire.»<sup>4</sup>

In preparation for its mission, the army's ability as a mobile strike force was enhanced by the 1953 formation of special unit 101, trained in night warfare and demolition. It got its combat experience by massacring 53 civilians, mostly women and children, in their homes, in Qibya on October 14, 1953. At a time when Israeli armistice violations were twice those recorded on the Jordanian side, the Zionists called this a 'reprisal raid'. Actually it was to provide a model for the whole Israeli army. Unity 101 was merged with the paratroopers under Ariel Sharon's command. In Dayan's words, «Its achievements set an example to all other formations in the army.»<sup>5</sup>

By June 1956, 'Israel' had finalized its plans for attacking Egypt, and the US had given the green light by withdrawing its pledge to aid the building of the Aswan Dam. With Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956, 'Israel' entered into war preparations with Britain and France, driven by a number of interrelated aims: One, 'Israel' vehemently resisted the end of British colonial presence in Egypt, as seen in its 1954 bombing campaign against Egyptian cities, hitting British and US targets among others, in an effort to sabotage the negotiations on British withdrawal from the canal and its bases. Two, 'Israel' shared France's animosity towards the Algerian liberation movement which was supported by Nasser. By joining France in war, 'Israel' hoped to elicit French arms. Three, 'Israel' wanted to prove its abilities to the imperialist powers by toppling Nasser's regime and supposedly lessening Soviet influence in the area, while securing imperialist control of a vital waterway. Obviously, this war was not fought in self-defense, for as Dayan had told Israeli ambassadors in Washington, London and Paris in 1955, «... we face no danger at all of an Arab advantage for the next 8-10 years.»<sup>6</sup> Rather 'Israel' was eager to help punish Nasser's Egypt for having dared to oppose the US's cherished Baghdad Pact and to end British colonialism's military presence and economic domination in Egypt. Nasser's opposition to the traditional Arab rulers, and his support to nationalist forces throughout the Arab world, threatened the reactionary status quo on which imperialism and Zionism relied for asserting their dominance.

Covered by British and French air support (including the use of napalm), Israeli ground forces attacked Egypt on October 29th. Though failing to topple Nasser, 'Israel' did achieve several aims. The French arms and advisors sent in preparation for the tripartite aggression were the beginning of the Zionist state's first stable and large-scale military cooperation with an imperialist country, which was to lead to other alliances. Though the US pretended to distance itself from the attack on Egypt, and forced its imperialist rivals to withdraw, 'Israel' was allowed to remain in the Sinai for four months, doing reconnaissance for its next try against Nasser, and inviting foreign military attachés to view captured Soviet arms. «By 1973, weapons systems evaluation and testing would be one of the central elements of the US-Israeli 'friendship'.»<sup>7</sup>

Last but not least, under cover of the state of war, the Zionist forces dealt a heavy blow to the Palestinians under oc-

cupation. As the war began, curfew was imposed without warning on a number of Palestinian villages enclosed in the Zionist state. In one village, Kafr Qasim, Israeli forces opened fire on residents who were returning from their work in the fields unawares of the curfew; 51 people were killed, well over half of them women and children.

## THE 1967 AGGRESSION THE MIDEAST VIETNAM

In aims and execution, the 1967 invasion of Syria, Egypt, Jordan, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was an expanded version of the 1956 aggression against Egypt. This time, however, the Zionists' conduct was even more closely geared to international contingencies. Their retention of the Arab land they in-

'Israel' gets biggest share of U.S. foreign aid-\$3 billion a year plus \$1.5 billion of emergency economic aid.



vaded reflected the growth of their alliance with US imperialism in particular. While the Zionists might have won the war with their own forces, US military and reconnaissance support was essential for making the charted territorial gains in a short time span.

In 1958, the US had demonstrated its will to steer developments in the Middle East by sending the Marines to bolster the reactionary state in Lebanon against the nationalist movement. In the ensuing period, a series of events elicited imperialist-Zionist worry: the fall of the monarchy in Iraq, the government crisis in Jordan, the growing cooperation of Syria and Egypt with the Soviet Union, and later the rise of the Yemeni national liberation movement and the Palestinian revolution. By the mid-sixties, however, the US was too bogg-

ed down in its war on Vietnam to intervene elsewhere on a large scale. The Zionist leadership eyed the chance to assert its role in defending imperialist interests in the Middle East.

The Zionists had already been encouraged by the first major delivery of US arms in 1962 (Hawk missiles). In the years 1964-6, under the Johnson Administration, a «new, unprecedented covert military-security relationship was forged»<sup>8</sup> between the US and the Zionist state, motivated by concern over the advance of the Arab national liberation movement and Soviet influence in the area. In this sense, the Zionist state, via the 1967 aggression, provided the model for the subsequently devised Nixon Doctrine for local gendarmerie regimes to enforce US policy in the ‘third world’. With increasing international polarization between the pro- and anti-liberation forces, ‘Israel’ wanted to show it could take care of the liberation movement in the Middle East. Also, in view of its political and military aims, and economic needs, ‘Israel’ had begun to develop its arms industry for export; it needed a testing field to show its wares.

These goals dovetailed with Zionism’s inherent ambitions to wipe out the Palestinians as a people, for they would all be uprooted or subject to occupation. By occupying more Arab land, the Israelis would confront the Arab regimes with a new status quo, to force them to negotiate ‘peace’ on unequivocally pro-Zionist conditions. ‘Israel’ had begun detailed planning of a military government for the West Bank in 1962,<sup>9</sup> relying on the experience of having imposed martial law on the Palestinians under occupation since 1948. Throughout the early sixties, provocative raids were periodically launched against neighboring countries, especially Syria. In May 1967, such provocations led Nasser to close the Straits of Tiran to Israeli ships and to station troops in the Sinai. Though the closure had minimal economic effects on ‘Israel’ and the troops in the Sinai were less than needed to defend the area, ‘Israel’ used these measures as the pretext for air attacks on Syria, Jordan and Egypt on June 5th, igniting the six-day war.

Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol had asked for US support if the Soviet Union were to intervene. President Johnson had authorized emergency arms shipments to ‘Israel’ on May 23rd, and the entire 6th Fleet was despatched to the Mediterranean. In fact, the US itself had plans for intervention if the Israelis did not fare well in combat. As it turned out, the most meaningful US support came in the form of a secret operation whose full dimensions have only recently been revealed.

On June 3rd, the 38th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron of the US air force was secretly flown from Ramstein, West Germany, to a US base in Spain, purportedly for a NATO exercise. There it was joined by cargo planes with reconnaissance equipment and technicians of the US 17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, flown from Upper Heyford, England. By June 4th, these forces were in the Negev, their planes painted as Israeli planes and the US pilots equipped with papers to appear as civilian contract employees hired by the Israeli government. On June 5th, they began overflights, surveying the damage inflicted on the Syrian, Egyptian and Jordanian armed forces, making films that were delivered to ‘Israel’ and the US. On June 8th and 9th, they made night reconnaissance flights with phosphorous after most of the Arabs’ planes were destroyed, to ferret out troop movements. The next day, ‘Israel’ staged air attacks to devastate the retreating troops. Without this US reconnaissance, ‘Israel’ would have been totally unable to capture the amount of territory it did in such a short time.<sup>10</sup>

Protected by the US umbrella, the Israeli forces not only knocked out three Arab armies. They began their still ongoing drive to Judaize the West Bank and Gaza Strip, relentlessly attacking Palestinian civilians, to force them from their homeland. As the US was becoming notorious for dumping napalm on Vietnamese children, the Zionists were spewing the same lethal product down on fleeing civilians. On June 6th, while only isolated elements of the Jordanian army were still fighting, the Israeli air force made a series of strikes on the West Bank where there were no military forces or positions. On June 8th, as the United Arab Republic accepted the UN ceasefire, Israeli planes were bombing Mafrqa, on the outskirts of Amman. A UPI despatch of June 11th reported Israeli planes strafing refugees running for safety. In the Latrun area, on the Jerusalem-Ramle road, three villages, Imwas, Yalu and Beit Nubah, home of 10,000 Palestinians, were dynamited and bulldozed out of existence. Their residents were rounded up and expelled with only the clothes on their backs by the Zionist army’s 4th brigade on its way to the Jordan River. Two-thirds of Qalqilia was destroyed in the same operation. In June 1967 during, but mostly right after the fighting, 200,000 Palestinians were expelled from the West Bank; another 200,000 were expelled in the following months, many of them from the Gaza Strip.<sup>11</sup>

## STATE WITHOUT BORDERS AGGRESSION WITHOUT LIMITS

For reasons of space, we will stop our review of the Arab-Zionist wars at this point. The next war - October 1973 - was, as stated earlier, the Arab bourgeois regime’s response, though an insufficient one, to the 1967 Zionist expansion. The course of the October war demonstrated the US’s readiness to go all out to rescue the Zionist state from even partial threats. The aftermath has been a concerted Israeli-US political and military onslaught to impose stability in the region under their joint domination, culminating in the US-sponsored, all-out Israeli war on the PLO and Lebanon in 1982. The 1982 war exposed to the world the full dimension of Israeli aggression, which as we have tried to point out here, was equally the case in the prior wars.

The Zionist state, by virtue of its goals and mode of creation, assigned itself to a perpetual condition of war, making it an ideal tool for striking anti-imperialist forces in the region. The ultimate result of the Israeli drive for total domination is the development of nuclear weapons, which we will cover in the next installment of this study.

<sup>1</sup> Green, Stephen, *Taking Sides: America’s Secret Relations with a Militant Israel*, New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1984, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel, Richard A., *Operation Peace for Galilee*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1984, p. 11. (This book is both full of deliberate lies to defame the PLO and other errors which appear to be pure carelessness. However, Gabriel is a former US intelligence officer and enjoys close ties with the Israeli military establishment, so we include reference to his book on such matters.)

<sup>3</sup> Rabinovich, Itamar and Jehuda Reinhartz (editors), *Israel in the Middle East*, Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> both quotes from Hadawi, Sami, *Palestine in Focus*, Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1968, pages 10-12.

<sup>5</sup> quoted in Green, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p. 99.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p. 144.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p. 180

<sup>9</sup> *Journal of Palestine Studies*, no. 59, Spring 1986, p. 125.

<sup>10</sup> Green, *op. cit.*, pages 205-8.

<sup>11</sup> Hadawi, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

# An End to the Camp War?

Throughout the last weeks of March and the beginning of April, the aggression of Amal and its supporters rose to brutal, new heights. Meanwhile, the people in the besieged camps of Beirut, joined by other Palestinians, and national and democratic organizations, staged an effective protest campaign. Not only were they laying their lives on the line to secure the basic needs for survival, Palestinians were also raising their voices high in protest of the inhuman situation.

In the first week of April, Syrian troops were deployed in the camps of Burj Al Barajneh and Shatila, six weeks after their entry into West Beirut. The horrendous siege came to an end. Although Amal initially violated the ceasefire it had agreed upon, sufficient quantities of food and medical supplies entered the camps to relieve the thousands of war-weary Palestinians after their heroic steadfastness.

Hopefully this marks the prelude to resolving the issue of the Palestinians' rights to self-defense and armed struggle against Zionist aggression from Lebanese soil. However, keeping in mind Amal's numerous violations of previous agreements, one reserves the right to be skeptical, no matter how much optimism the present events may inspire. There are a number of indications that a comprehensive solution has yet to be achieved, such as the recent outbursts of firing in the area of Kafr Fallous and Maghdousheh, and Amal's continued insistence on Palestinian withdrawal from three villages east of Sidon.

The Palestinians have shown their seriousness about reaching a stable solution that would relieve the camp population of future threats. This was seen in Palestinian withdrawal from Maghdousheh and the nearby village, Zaghadraya, and in the intense efforts in Sidon among Palestinian organizations and the Popular Nasserite Organization, to resolve the question of the three villages - Janasnaya, Ain Al Dulub and Al Quraya. In contrast, Amal has shown inflexibility and continued to fabricate new conditions, exposing its intention to continue the campaign against Palestinians, despite

the present lull in the fighting. Despite Amal's efforts to appear more flexible, events in the last days of March and the beginning of April, up to the first hours of the Syrian deployment, further exposed Amal's true intentions.

### PROTESTING THE PASSAGE OF DEATH

The end of March and beginning of April witnessed unprecedented military attacks on Burj Al Barajneh, especially at the Jalbout entrance which became widely known as the 'Passage of Death'. Amal snipers continued to use men, women, children and the elderly as targets in their grotesque game of death. In March, this passage was opened more than fifteen times. Each and every time, Palestinian women who dared to venture through it were martyred or wounded. A Palestine National Salvation Front (PNSF) communique stated that more than 35 had been martyred and seventy wounded at this point. On March 28th, Amal militiamen tried to infiltrate into Burj Al Barajneh through this entry, but were repulsed by Palestinian revolutionaries. In the two weeks before the Syrian entry into the camps, four more Palestinians were killed and eighteen wounded at this ill-fated path. On April 5th, one day before the Syrian deployment and the day when Amal had agreed to uphold the ceasefire, three Palestinians were wounded by sniper bullets in the 'Passage of Death'. Moreover, Amal gangsters confiscated food supplies and thousands of Lebanese pounds which were supposed to be distributed to families of martyrs. There were numerous incidents where Palestinian women were beaten up.

Palestinians outside the camps were also subject to Amal's tyranny. Many were kidnapped, only to be found murdered in some side street or alley. In March, one Palestinian was found outside the vicinity of Shatila with fourteen wounds from a machine gun shot at close range. Another Palestinian who lived outside Burj Al Barajneh was kidnapped by Amal. His home was stormed and his belongings stolen in front of the family; he was later found dead in a side street.

In protest of Amal's atrocities, 150 women marched out of Burj Al Barajneh on March 25th, to join 3,000 who had gathered at the airport road. Amal's response was a barrage of fire which left six martyrs and seven wounded in its trail. On March 29th, Palestinian women gathered in front of the mosque in Shatila, to march in protest of the siege. Amal enacted another massacre. When the women got within range, a barrage of machine gun fire was let loose; five women were martyred and many others wounded. Those whom the bullets luckily missed were scattered into the alleyways, unable to find secure shelter or to drag the dead and wounded away from Amal's deadly shooting range.

On April 3rd, after much negotiation and two days before the Syrians deployed in Shatila, Amal conceded to allow one of two supply trucks into Shatila. (The other one Amal confiscated for its own use.) After the truck entered and people had gathered to get their share, Amal and the Lebanese Army's 6th Brigade attacked with rockets, setting the truck ablaze. Three Palestinians were killed on the spot - two of them children, one and a half, and three years old. Twenty others were wounded, in addition to the many who suffered serious burns as they tried to salvage bags of rice and flour.

### DESPERATE CONDITIONS

The desperation that led people to risk their lives for some bags of rice and flour can be understood on the background of Shatila's critical situation. Five days before, five of the

wounded (three youths, one woman and an elderly man) had died due to lack of proper nourishment and medical treatment. Ten children, ranging in age from four months to one and a half years, had died from malnutrition. Forty-five other children were threatened with the same fate. No less a testimony to Amal's fascism was its refusal to let two children out of the camp to be treated for cancer.

It had become common to see people rummaging among heaps of garbage to find something edible that had been discarded by mistake. The approximately 40 wounded in Shatila's underground shelter had lost consciousness for lack of food, loss of blood or inability to withstand pain in the absence of painkillers. Doctors were forced to carry out many amputations without anaesthesia, an especially traumatic situation when a child was concerned. With no blood bags, no soap and no antiseptic stronger than boiled water, doctors were forced to perform surgery by candlelight, because there was no fuel left to run generators. People had begun to burn their furniture, doors and window frames for cooking and warmth. The mountains of garbage, clouds of insects, open sewage and polluted water only added to this impossible situation of death and disease. One Shatila resi-

dent voiced the thoughts of the thousands under siege: «Why can't any power in the world put a stop to this nightmare. We are on the verge of death.» A spokeswoman for the Shatila branch of the General Union of Palestinian Women said, «We die slowly and the whole world looks on.»

In March alone, 46 were wounded and 43 killed in Burj Al Barajneh. In Shatila, 63 were wounded and 25 killed. It is estimated that in Shatila, with a population of 3,000, approximately one-third of whom are under 15 years of age, one in every five persons was killed or wounded since the state of siege began on November 26th. Many have been wounded more than once, and many had to suffer amputations. In Burj Al Barajneh, with a population of 20-30,000, one in every fifteen persons was wounded or killed.

In the face of these atrocities, a broad protest campaign was launched, led by the besieged camp residents themselves. A hail of appeals from Palestinian organizations, the Shatila and Burj popular committees and the GUPW were forwarded to President Hafiz Al Asad, Col. Muamer Qaddafi, President Shadli Bin Jadeed, Democratic Yemen's President Haider Abu Baker Al Attas, the Secretary

General of the Arab League, the United Nations, the national and progressive Lebanese organizations and religious personalities, as well as to international women's organizations, especially the World Federation of Democratic Women.

Demonstrators, led by PNSF members, marched in Nahr Al Bared and Badawi camps in North Lebanon, protesting the siege and calling on the International Red Cross to intervene promptly to alleviate the suffering by evacuating the wounded and letting in supplies.

In Tripoli, Lebanon, popular committees held a sit-in in front of the ICRC headquarter, emphasizing the same demands. In southern Lebanon, representatives of eight Palestinian organizations and of the popular committees of Ain Al Hilweh, Miyeh Miyeh, Sidon, Al Kharoub region, the costal area, Nabatiyah and Tyre called a strike on March 31st, denouncing the siege of the camps. On April 1st, a massive demonstration was held in Ain Al Hilweh, organized by the PNSF committee. At the end of the demonstration, speeches were made in a school playground, condemning

Angry Palestinian women and children demonstrators protest siege of refugee camps in Beirut.



Nabih Berri and demanding Syrian deployment.

The residents of Mar Elias camp in Beirut were very active especially the women. Three women's demonstrations were organized and hundreds of women participated. The submitted petitions to Syrian responsibles in Beirut, to the ICRC and religious personalities to intervene to stop the siege.

All the suffering did not keep the youth of Burj Al Barajneh from commemorating national occasions. The Democratic Palestinian Youth Organization in the besieged camp held an art exhibition to commemorate Land Day, calling it the «Exhibition for the Defense of Camps Under Siege.» Ironically, Amal's response to the avalanche of activities condemning it was that the Palestinians were «exaggerating and overreacting to divert attention from Palestinian-Israeli contacts»!

## WARY OPTIMISM

On April 5th an agreement was reached as a result of intensive meetings between the PNSF and Amal, under

Syrian auspices, giving hope that the nightmare of the besieged camps in Beirut would be put to an end. The agreement stipulated:(1) a comprehensive ceasefire starting April 6th; (2) lifting the blockade on supplies, allowing supply trucks entry, and allowing women to leave and reenter the camp freely, starting April 6th; (3) designation of the points of deployment for Syrian troops; and (4) evacuation of the wounded, starting April 7th.

This agreement was implemented despite incidents of Amal violating the ceasefire. In Burj Al Barajneh, three Palestinians were wounded, while in Shatila one was martyred and another four wounded. Both incidents occurred on April 6th. In Shatila, supplies could not be completely unloaded because of the intensity of the shooting. At the meeting of all representatives on April 6th, indignation was voiced at Amal's violations. After unanimous condemnation of Amal, the meeting turned to discuss the details of evacuating the wounded and the Syrian deployment.

With the actual deployment of Syrian troops in Shatila and Burj Al Barajneh

on April 7th, calm prevailed. Roads were cleared in preparation for evacuating the wounded, and food and medical supplies were unloaded without incident; 25 wounded were evacuated from Shatila and 47 from Burj.

The black clouds of siege are slowly lifting, and Palestinians are picking up the pieces of their disrupted lives once again. However, their children will forever bear the scars of the daily horrors of death and war. The optimism generated by the new agreement to lift the siege is not based on illusions that Amal has reconsidered its original intent to eliminate Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon. The lifting of the siege is rather understood as a temporary retreat brought about by Palestinian struggle and steadfastness, and the pressure applied by the broad solidarity campaign with the besieged camps, condemning Amal on the political and humanitarian levels. That Palestinian optimism is accompanied by wariness is quite justified considering Amal's violation of past agreements, its initial violation of this latest ceasefire and the numerous veiled threats of Amal officials.

For genuine optimism to prevail, a number of measures must be taken. First and foremost, Syria must oblige Amal to lift the military siege of the Beirut camps. Moreover, there must be guarantees that Amal and its supporters will retreat from the area of the camps, and be permanently prevented from new attempts to carry out their original plans. Only then can one say that the stated purpose of the Syrian troops' entry into West Beirut has been fulfilled. This would be the prerequisite for working towards the implementation of the 1985 Damascus agreement with regard to the Palestinian camps, regulating relations between the Palestinian and Lebanese nationalist forces on a sound basis, to guarantee the rebuilding of the Palestinian-Lebanese-Syrian national alliance. The new agreement must be dealt with on a comprehensive basis, avoiding repetition of tragedy in the future, while ensuring Palestinian rights to self-defense and anti-Zionist struggle in Lebanon. If not, the latest agreement cannot inspire optimism at all.

## MAJOR RESISTANCE ATTACK

At dawn, April 18th, resistance fighters attacked the Israeli forces and Lahd's South Lebanon Army, storming their positions at Al Shroumiyah and Olman, in the occupied border zone, South Lebanon. Fierce battles ensued, continuing throughout the morning. The Zionists brought in reinforcements from occupied Palestine, and shelled scores of southern villages, damaging many homes and destroying a mosque. Lahd's army began attacking the Popular Liberation Army at Kafr Fallous, farther north. Israeli helicopters hovered over the occupied border zone, leveling heavy machine gun fire on southern villagers.

The resistance fighters shelled the enemy forces' bases at Olman and Al Shroumiyah, besieging them and blocking their retreat. Meanwhile, the Zionist-SLA forces were attacked at six other points in the occupied border zone. The Islamic Resistance claimed responsibility for this massive operation, saying that 30-40 Zionist soldiers

were killed, and the Olman base captured. Over 200 resistance fighters participated in the attack. Three Merkava tanks were destroyed in the battle. Though the Israelis claimed that they lost only four soldiers, it is clear that this is one of the biggest and most successful attacks launched on the Israeli occupiers in South Lebanon in the recent period. The threat it posed to the Zionists was obvious from the fact that both Chief of Staff Moshe Levi and General Peled, commander of the northern front, were directly involved in the battle.

## MORE ZIONIST AGGRESSION

On April 9th, four Israeli Cobra helicopters attacked the Palestinian refugee camps near Sidon, Ain Hilweh and Miye Miyeh, in the Zionists' perpetual war against the Palestinian people. This time, however, the Palestinian revolution succeeded in shooting down one of the helicopters, which crashed into the Mediterranean.



# The Arab Cultural Movement in the Zionist State

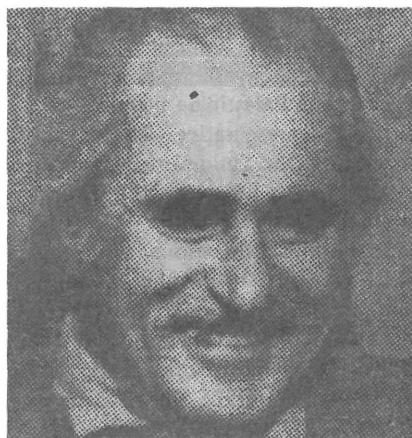
Below we have translated a chapter from the book, *The Arab Masses' Path of Struggle in Israel*, written by the famous Palestinian historian, Emil Tuma, and published in May 1982. Tuma died on August 27, 1985. He had been prominent in the Committee for the Defense of the Land and a politbureau member of the Israeli Communist Party (Rakah).

We've seen how the Israeli rulers always wanted the Palestinians to be only hewers of wood and drawers of water. These rulers have constantly obstructed secondary and university education (for the Palestinians). They've imposed a cultural siege around the Arab youth, depriving them of their history, traditions and even correct Arabic language. In the first period after the establishment of Israel, a thick wall was erected to prohibit contact between the Arab population and the Arab world, in an attempt to prevent the infiltration of Arab cultural works.

These rulers even went so far as to propose the «creation of Arabic works (stories, poems, etc.), using the Hebrew language, as Hebrew works were created using Arabic and scores of other languages.» This was suggested in an article by Iliahu Aghasi in the Israeli daily, *Davar*, on May 25, 1956. (Iliahu is one of the heads of the Histadrut's Arab department.)

But the plan to spread national nihilism among the Arab population failed, thanks to the efforts of the Israeli Communist Party and its newspapers and magazines: *Al Ittihad*, *Al Jadeed*, *Al Ghad* and *Al Darb*. These publications have provided the Palestinians with an abundance of Arabic cultural works. They were a window looking out on literary and cultural works in the Arab world, as well as socialist culture in the socialist world, and progressive culture in the capitalist world.

Soon the contradictions between the nihilistic education (in public schools) and the general atmosphere among the Arab population became evident. While being subjected to distorted education in school, a student could easily get acquainted with his Arab/Palestinian culture, thanks to the Communist Party's information campaigns. The conflict between the two



Emil Tuma

trends leaned more decisively in favor of the trend adhering to the progressive Arab culture. Progressive nationalist intellectuals have risen up and contributed to enriching the Palestinian and Arab culture with their literature, whether poetry, stories or research...

Several good poets have emerged with poems that harmonized revolutionary contents with an original form. In the field of literature, works focused on the themes of defending the land, staying in the homeland, the Palestinian people's destiny and the social struggle. Without reviewing all these works, we could mention the poetry of Samih Al Qasem, Tawfiq Zayyad, Mahmoud Darwish, Salem Jubran, Nayef Salem, Samih Sabbagh and others. Their poetry has expounded the suffering of the Palestinians as a result of racial discrimination and oppression in Israel, using different styles and forms, simple as well as complex. To this, we could add the two novels of Emil Habibi, *Al Mutasha'el* and *Laka*, and the short stories of Mohammad Ali Taha, Mohammad Naffa', Hanna Ibrahim, Afif Salem and others. In addition to literature, there are the works by some writers on Arab history and the Arab-Islamic progressive cultural history.

It is important to point out some facts when summarizing the cultural

situation of the Arab population in Israel:

- The oppressive authorities have not succeeded in their attempts to sever the masses' ties with their Palestinian Arab cultural heritage.

- On the contrary, Palestinian intellectuals have succeeded in establishing a bridge between the Palestinians and the Arab masses in the Arab world.

- Palestinian Arab intellectuals in Israel have suffered as did their counterparts in the Arab world, and even more. Both have struggled to overcome the sociopolitical crisis which erupted after the 1967 war.

Obviously, such a development did not occur in a vacuum. Rather it went through the conflict that erupted between those Arab 'intellectuals' loyal to the oppressive authorities, and the patriotic and revolutionary intellectuals. In the course of this conflict, several intellectuals, who had been loyal to the authorities, moved from their reactionary position to patriotic and progressive positions; others joined the (pan-Arab) nationalist trends. The contradictions between Palestinian intellectuals in Israel have been decisive in the social, national and political battles that intensified during the historical stages experienced in the country, the region and internationally. This conflict was decided in the form and contents of cultural works.

The cultural works of Palestinians in Israel have greatly affected the universities that were forced to take them into consideration. Secondary schools as well have decided to include the works of some Palestinian poets and novelists in the Arab literature courses. The importance of this should not be overlooked even though the choice has been selective. (Only descriptive, symbolic works and those dealing with love were chosen.) We believe that what has been going on in cultural circles since the establishment of Israel shows that Palestinian poets and novelists in Israel have participated in the enrichment of the Palestinian culture, as well as the overall Arab culture.

The Palestinian cultural movement that has emerged in Israel has every right to be proud of its victories, of having overcome the obstacles erected by the Israeli authorities and all the frustrations it faced from internal and external sources.

# PFLP Visit to Nicaragua

A PFLP delegation headed by Central Committee member Taysir Quba'ah, including the PFLP's representative in Cuba and comrade Abu Jihad, paid an official visit to Nicaragua, March 18-25th, on the invitation of the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front).

Upon arrival in Managua, the delegation was received by comrade Alberto Gallegos, member of the FSLN's Central Committee, responsible for Asia, Australia and the Middle East; and comrade Silvio, head of the Middle East department. A working meeting was held to discuss the delegation's agenda, and the latest developments on the Palestinian and Arab levels.

The delegation visited Nicaragua's sixth province where a meeting was held with minister Carlos Samora, representative of the president of Nicaragua. The delegation then headed for a frontline area where the revolutionary army is defending Nicaragua against the imperialist - and Israeli-supported counterrevolutionary gangs (contras). A full review of the contras' crimes and sabotage against innocent citizens was presented. The delegation also visited an agricultural cooperative, and witnessed the organizational and economic achievements of the Sandinista revolution.

Back in Managua, the delegation met with comrades Gustavo Morino, member of the Sandinista Assembly, first deputy to the head of the international relations department, and head of the department for Central and Latin America and liberation movements; Jose Pasos, second deputy to the head of the international relations department, and head of party political relations in the Asia, Africa and Australia department; and Alberto Gallegos. The talks focused on the political situation in Nicaragua and Central America, examining the conspiracies of imperialism, 'Israel' and their local agents. The talks also dealt with how to consolidate and develop the bilateral relations between the FSLN and the PFLP.

The PFLP delegation also met with Commandante Tomas Borge, the historical leader of the FSLN. They in-

formed him of the latest developments in the Palestinian and Arab arenas, and the efforts of the imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary alliance to liquidate the PLO, the Palestinian people's sole, legitimate representative. The delegation assured the Sandinista leadership of the PFLP's intentions to restore Palestinian national unity on a firm political and organizational basis, opposed to imperialism and Zionism. Comrade Borge informed the delegation about the achievements of the Sandinista revolution, and the desperate attempts of imperialism to turn back the wheels of history. He praised the Palestinian people's strug-

gle, the steadfastness of those besieged in the camps in Lebanon, and the PFLP's vanguard role within the Palestinian national struggle.

The delegation's meetings were topped by the meeting with Commandante Bayardo Arce, vice-president of the FSLN national leadership, who reviewed the internal situation in Nicaragua and the blows dealt to the contras by the Sandinista revolution. Comrade Arce also reaffirmed the Sandinista's firm position in support of the Palestinian people's just struggle. He conveyed the Sandinista leadership's appraisal of the Palestinian people's heroic struggle, the PFLP's vanguard role in this struggle and its efforts to restore the PLO's unity. Commandante Arce also conveyed the Sandinista leadership's best wishes to the PFLP's leadership and general secretary, comrade George Habash.

The delegation also met with Com-

Agricultural cooperative in Nicaragua



mandante Dora Maria, Minister of Health and member of the Sandinista Assembly, and with Patricia Alvir, head of Nicaragua's Solidarity, Knowledge and Friendship Committee.

The delegation met with representatives of liberation movements in Central and Latin America. The most distinguished meeting was with Shafiq Handal, one of the leaders of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front in El Salvador. The delegation presented a full review of the latest developments on the Arab and Palestinian levels.

The Palestinian community in Nicaragua celebrated the delegation's visit with a dinner party in their honor, attended by the PLO's representative. Comrade Quba'ah spoke about the latest developments concerning the Palestinian situation.

### VISITS TO DEMOCRATIC GERMANY AND CUBA

En route to Nicaragua, the delegation stopped in Democratic Germany where a meeting was held with comrades Krause and Zimmerfield of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. The talks concentrated on the war waged by Amal against the Palestinian camps, and the latest efforts to restore the PLO's unity.

The delegation also visited Havana where a meeting was held with comrades Eloy, deputy secretary of the international relations committee of the Communist Party's Central Committee; Abscal, head of the Central Committee's Middle East department; and Gueydar, head of the department for Palestine. The talks focused on developments concerning the Palestinian cause and the imperialist-Zionist-Arab reactionary conspiracies directed against it. Also discussed was the continuous siege and war waged by Amal against the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, the heroic struggle of the Palestinian masses in occupied Palestine, and the dangers of the Jordanian regime's division of functions plan. The latest efforts to restore the PLO's unity were reviewed. The two parties reaffirmed the necessity of consolidating and developing the bilateral relations between the PFLP and the Cuban Communist Party.

# El Salvador

## Approaching A Decisive Time

While in Nicaragua, the PFLP delegation had the opportunity to meet with comrade Shafiq Handel, Secretary General of the Communist Party of El Salvador, a main component of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front/Revolutionary Democratic Front (FMLN/FDR). The following is based on his assessment of the struggle in El Salvador today.

Over the last two years, great developments have taken place in the revolutionary struggle in El Salvador, after the lull in the mass movement of 1981-83. At that time, the confrontation took the form of military operations in the countryside, while the revolutionary movement was not firmly based in the urban areas. The changes of the last few years have marked a great advance for the mass struggle in the cities as well as in the countryside.

The Salvadorean liberation struggle has been faced by a sophisticated counterinsurgency drive worked out by US imperialism in the wake of its failure to head off the Sandinistas' victory in neighboring Nicaragua. While promoting President Duarte as a 'reform-minded liberal', the Reagan Administration has pumped in massive aid to the army's brutal campaign against the Salvadorean revolutionaries and the population at large. To deprive the reactionary government forces of

the initiative, the FMLN revised its military tactics while undertaking new political action.

On the military level, the FMLN organized its fighting forces into smaller units and spread them throughout the country, covering areas where the war had been non-existent. The FMLN's forces are now operating in all 14 provinces of the country, including the outskirts of San Salvador and other major cities. Guerrilla units were formed not only for military actions, but for political/mass actions as well. The revolutionaries refined their ability to carry out locally based operations with explosives and land mines against government troops. Their success with land mines has been particularly prominent, to the point that these gained a status equal to that of the government's murderous air raids. Duarte's government has officially demanded that the FMLN stop the land mines. The revolutionaries in turn demanded that the government cease the air raids. This had an immensely positive effect on the masses' morale.

The FMLN's revised tactics thwarted the US-directed effort to transform the Salvadorean army from a conventional force, relying on large troop concentrations and fixed positions, to a dynamic, instrument for counterinsurgency, operating via mobile units and air raids. The army's new tactics have not stopped the spread of the revolution. Meanwhile, the FMLN has developed its own ability to concentrate its forces when it determines to launch major operations. The Pentagon has expressed worry about the revolutionary escalation.

The revolutionaries' success in the battlefield was compounded by a rise in

Comrade Shafiq Handal-center, with PFLP delegation.



the workers' struggle in the urban areas. In 1985, there was a great development in the labor movement and an increase in strikes, marking a growing leftist orientation. Eighty percent of the strikes were in state institutions. There were strikes in every ministry except for the ministry of defense.

In many respects, 1986 marked a turning point in the balance of forces. The state embarked on a series of agricultural reforms, designed to erode the FMLN's relations with the masses. However, the FMLN's political/mass efforts proved sufficient to weather this maneuver. The government raised the banner of defeating the revolutionary forces, relying on US support, and began preparing public opinion for this. The reactionaries thought it was only a matter of time before the revolutionaries would surrender, but they grossly underestimated the FMLN/FDR's ability to withstand and to adapt their tactics to meet the changing realities. Events in 1986 exposed the erosion of US efforts to

strengthen the government's military apparatus. The army had been increased from 12,000 to 52,000. Yet with more than \$3,000 million spent to renew the reactionary military establishment, plans for further enlargement have floundered. Instead, soldiers are deserting even though they were being paid more than workers in an attempt to buy their loyalty.

Parallel to its military problems, the government has failed to halt the economy's deterioration. Duarte's economic policy has not only antagonized the entire labor movement, it has created contradictions in the government institutions, pitting political and military officials against each other, and causing deep concern in the private sector. Businessmen are sending their money outside the country, and some have asked Duarte to resign. This downward slide has prompted US policy-makers to consider replacing Duarte, but so far this option has been put aside for fear of alienating his Christian Democratic Party and opening new contradictions that could

be exploited by the revolutionary movement.

The government's all-around failure has given the popular movement new opportunities to develop. The conflict is no longer solely between the rich and poor, but involves all sectors. In this context, the FMLN/FDR, while continuing the liberation war, launched a new peace plan in July 1986. The front has previously made initiatives for a political settlement to avoid unnecessary suffering to the people. What is new about the current plan is the unprecedented chance to rally a truly broad national front, including sectors of all different orientations, to the idea of a Salvadorean solution, rather than delivering the country's fate into the hands of US imperialism.

Providing the revolutionary backbone for the FMLN's continuing advances is the growing unification process in its ranks. The five component parties of the front have decided to unite into one. This has meant a restructuring of the military forces, and unification of all mass organizing work as well as informational activities. Comrade Handel summed up the significance of this by saying: «We have achieved an advanced level of national unity, and our struggle is very close to a decisive time. We don't set an exact date, but we are very close to gaining victory. We thoroughly understand the problems of the organization - without this, the enemy would have defeated us long ago. We are sufficiently strong to face the state. We are organizing the people and leading the revolution. Had we not achieved this unity, we would be dispersed in different areas... We are preparing ourselves for the enemy's next counterattack, while continuing our efforts for negotiations. We believe that decisive events will take place this year and the next. This is not a prophecy. It is our analysis.»

